

ZIGZAG

BLONDIE
Back to the roots

NO. 75 AUGUST 1977 30 PENCE \$1.50
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CRIMINALS
EX-DOLL TURNS TO CRIME

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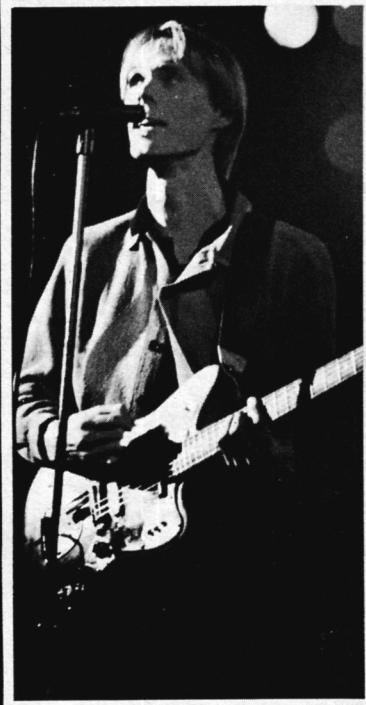
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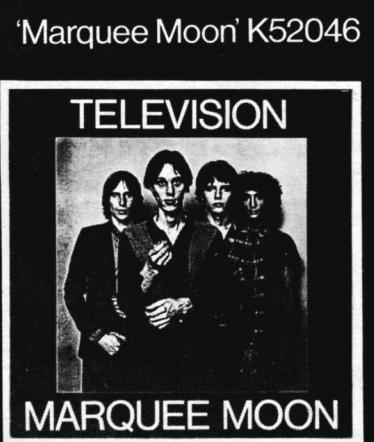
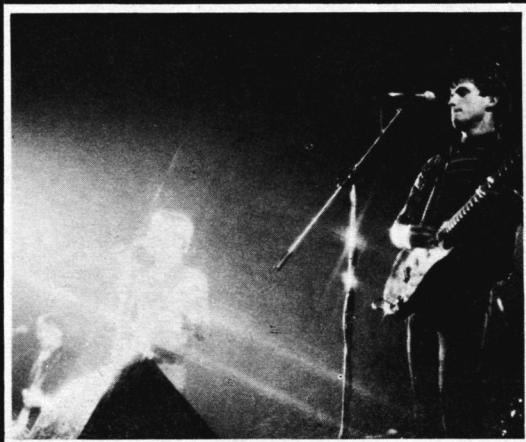
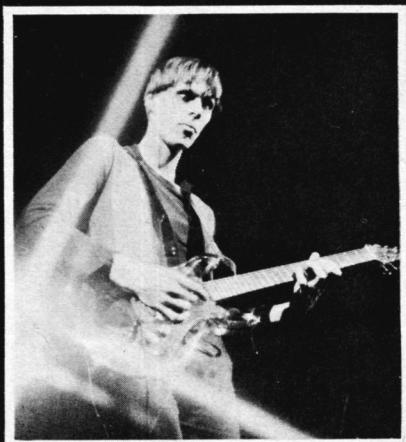
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ission... GEDDIT?

"YOU THINK IT'S THE END BUT IT'S JUST THE BEGINNING..."

(BOB MARLEY 1976)

Here we are in 1977 and there hasn't been a more exciting time for music in years... I mean I go to bed every morning and wonder what's gonna have happened when I wake up. There's so much good stuff developing and being thrown up. And at the same time the opposition gets steeper each day... (as do the number of dopey pretend punks)

No, what's happening here at Zigzag is basically a boot up the buttocks of Boredom, which has often ruled here. Boring old Californian crooners are out... you think I'm gonna say "Punk Rock is in!"... well, I'm not. Music that's FUN, EXCITING, VITAL, RELEVANT and created by people who care is. Why should we write about people who don't care for their fans anyway? We're gonna try and mirror current developments instead of past ones - NOW instead of then, but with the occasional nod to the past where it's necessary (or fun!)

Things that have to be said will be said - like Danny Baker's piece over the page. Yeah, notice the new writers? Danny (current editor of "Sniffin' Glue") is one of the best; he should have an outlet, like a lot of others - HERE!

Talk about being chucked in the deep end! I'm surprised this ^{issue} ever came out! (Wasn't Pete's last issue a corker... I have to thank old Frame - without him I wouldn't have got here and the world wouldn't have Zigzag!) Pete's completed his MCS history this ish with John Sinclair's imprisonment. Strong stuff.

I know it might seem like Needs monthly but I promise it won't be in future! But I must say I believe in The Slits, and that's why they're here. Hope you see 'em! There's also a thing on Blondie and the first U.K. article on ex-DOH Sylvain's new band the CRIMINALS from New York Rockers (and Joey Ramone's!) Ellen Callahan. Adrian of '78 Thrills' has done The Boys and Steve Walsh tackled the Subway Sect, one of the most intriguing of the new bands. Me 'n' Dan went and spoke to the RODS... that's here, so's REGGAE (at last!) That's it - Have fun!

Kris Needs

THE FRONT BIT

If you were with a prostitute and she said, "You can use me as long as you don't enjoy yourself," would you bother?

The Vortex is in Wardour Street. This is an excerpt from a letter in the Daily Mail after the Sex Pistols TOTP:

"Although I agree there was nothing obscene in the record, their behaviour and appearance certainly was. It is not enough to ban the odd record. If we are to put an end to this dangerous cult we must afford them no publicity..." Mrs. Jefferson, Blackpool.

This woman has been told all her life that she is moral and decent if she keeps in her place, she just reads the daily news and swears by every word. There are never any low class twits, only cockney sparrows and 'characters', her kind of decency is to be subservient to whomever she is told knows better, she needs Tony Blackburn's lies that tell her that Guys and Dolls are typical kids, she knows she is a success because the newspapers let her know, (after all, none of her children are these herepunks), if I tell her she has no right to tell me anything she will use her favourite weapon, her husband who died so that I might wear a suit. Because of her thinking, my generation is her generation as per catalogue.

I can't get angry about her, it's not her fault, I need her to remind me that my life isn't only rock'n' roll and that it's only because I continually mix with my crowd I sometimes get lazy. I'm not saying 'peace my child' either, if she tried to physically stop me doing something I would knock her spark out, because I hate her deeply, but if I got angry with every jerk who got blind about me I'd be put away, and besides if she meant something other than just making up the population figures I'd care, but she was stillborn and she knows it.

The real people who have got to know are the couldn't care less mob, who if they did, have means of swaying voices, the type that couldn't care less the Pistols ain't allowed to play in this country but buy A&M copies of God save the Queen to file under 'S', and if there is one thing that makes me take up arms it's bored richkids treating my life as this week's trend, (I dunno about fur coats but anyone who wears them Harpers and Queen punk chic outfits is in order for laying out), richkids don't get sent to ignorance factories for the first fifteen years to have every spark of pride and ambition ironed out so that their idea of getting somewhere is their own desk in the bank after thirty years of toadying to 'sir'.

People will probably read this and be thinkin' 'ah why don't he come off the moaning and tell me what the new bands are like...' well, John, no, y'see I write about punk and you just want to read about something that'll scare your mum, I'm sure that elsewhere someone will let ya know it IS only rock'n'roll.

BEACH BOYS BOUNCE BACK!

At the CBS Convention during the last week in July, a series of concerts were held which featured various multi-million selling acts of (generally) unmitigated boredom, who the company were showing off to their various licensees around the world.

The final night featured Crawler, who played reasonably, although they would have been sensational playing the same set five years ago. They were followed by the unspeakable Teddy Pendergrass, who fronted a million piece orchestra and a team of dancers, and seemed to play for about a day and a half.

About three hours late (around one a.m. I think), the Beach Boys came on, which was what a number of people had been waiting several hours for. Mick Jones and Joe Strummer were there, but stayed at the back, while your intrepid reporter and Vivien Goldman scattered foreign CBS per-

sonnel and photographers to kneel in devotion about a yard away from Mike Love's stocking feet.

Of course, the group were magnificent, and played several tracks from the highly underrated and quite indispensable new album, 'The Beach Boys Love You', including 'Honkin' Down the Highway', 'Airplane' and 'Roller Skating Child'. Brian Wilson was definitely there, playing keyboards and bass at various times, and singing a lot. He looked rather confused for a lot of the time, never more so than when Mike Love playfully tipped over Brian's grand piano, and the latter seemed incredibly upset. But he is back, and although the overwhelming consensus of opinion among those who interviewed him was that he certainly isn't a well man yet, the sight of him on stage was almost like what it'll be when we see Jim Morrison performing again.

And what did Mick and Joe think? Mick wasn't over impressed, although he had to admit that the vocals were spot on. He seemed to take my point when I likened my dash to the front of the audience to his own when the sadly disappointing Ian Hunter played Hammersmith a few weeks ago. Joe, on the other hand, thought they were pretty good, and explained that he knew a lot of the songs because one of his lady friends in the past had a great many Beach Boy records, and he'd been exposed to the group to the point where he knew most of the songs. Both admitted that the only reason they had gone to the show was to see the group.

The Clash have also been making some demos with Scratch, aka Lee Perry, and depending on the results, he could be producing the next album.

John Tobler

Punk is at the moment undergoing a fate worse than death in that it is starting to be catered for, and nobody gives a fuck so long as they can be seen to be part of the dailies favourite sport. The new wave, screwed up by too many cheap thrill merchants desperate for a disco of their own, has sold itself halfway for someplace to go even on a Monday. The type who still think that to pin yourself about and act bored is the message will do me a favour and keep in mind that they have to get up for work in the morning so don't leave it too late, eh? That lot are just younger versions of their dads, the Oxford bags set styled as to fit in with Disco'77. You can't be Joe Strummer with the ideals of Van McCoy.

Let's sort out one thing; all because they play fast and mention the dole don't mean they'll do 'till the Pistols come again, directionless energy is what heavy metal is all about, remember one wank is the energy equivalent of a four mile walk, so if you feel you must release yourself... I don't wanna stand crushed while some bloke's bashing away saying how terrible he has had it, and kid myself this is a night out, Bowie's Low has got nothing on some of the new bands for do it by

numbers, but, the new wave audiences have been beaten into applauding what they can get while ignoring any new trends that don't quite fit the Sunday People blueprint for shockability, and while we're cannibalising, we need some more 'personal' fanzines like we need Mrs. Jefferson up there.

And now those greasy bastards in Fleet Street, having got tired of playing St. George until they can think up another threat to decency to drum up that we're all one spirit, have proved to Mrs. Jefferson that you can't take liberties in good old law abiding Blighty for long by dusting off that previously tamed revolt in the fifties to slap this one's wrist. I mean the Teds have as much idea why they're beating up punks as councillors have of why they're banning new wave, just like Lenny Bruce said, 'If you're banned in town A and then banned in town B, well then town C has just got to ban you or it's, "well what kind of shithouse place are you running there, councillor?"' Respectability apart from meaning under the covers, is what the bloke next to you behaves like, and when you're part of a generation who through television like Yus My Dear has been told that ignorance is not only acceptable but hilarious, the future is pretty flat. I'd love to think that youth had just started to wake up, but the trend is to be honest. Ain't it.

The Vortex, (aha!), is in Wardour Street and a bouncer took photographs as we filed in. For six nights a week it is called Crackers Disco, where a few years back I would Johnny Bristol the night away, but every Monday it makes all the right noises for making money in this new wave desert. Of course, it's just the Roxy crowd

in a different hole in the ground but that 'feel' the Roxy has, (had), is lost in a place the size of a medium length market, plus the fact it gets hotter than shagging in the back of a car during the summer of '76.

The club opened to a now infamous debut with the bouncers having a dig at anyone they thought deserved it, but on the twice I've been since Joe and the boys've been fairly quiet, however as far as the people who run the place go we could be a typists' hen party so long as they get the pound note, (for four bands-VFM), which is a feeling the Roxy ain't got.

If you ain't in the group stage front, you won't see the bands, it takes ages to get to the bar, which is expensive. There, that's the surface facts done, the real meat is that it's the new wave's first real compromise after all that turning it's back on big biz talk. Up 'till now anyway merging has worked out far better for the punk if it's held together, but here we are in their hands, or rather their till, and it does seem as if the angry young men's switch blades are being filed smooth while they're pissed, fuck any revolt-whatcha 'avin'.



CRYSTAL CLEAR

Unlike a lot, I don't think the new wave has had it, I wish a lot more people in and out of bands could state what's happenin' though (at the Glue it'll be printed), cos between records a lot can happen to spirit, but I know for as long as I have access to voice what I think - whether you like it or not - I'll urge you and me to fuck apathy and its sluggish supporters kick 'em in the arse any way we can, to let 'em know you're not that mindless silly boy they want the kids to think, you're not the ignorance factories' bastard, you're not gonna let no Blackpool housewife put an end to your thinking.

Was I s'posed to say we're grateful of somewhere to go? No chance.

Danny Baker

...AND THE GROOVIES!

The Flamin' Groovies return to England this month to record a follow-up to "Shake Some Action" at Rockfield Studios. Dave Edmunds won't be producing this time.

The group, of which Mike Wilhelm is now a permanent member, are still on the Sire label, having sorted out their differences.

Some English gigs may be fixed to coincide with the album, which is long-awaited by many people.

The Groovies have been lying low in San Francisco since their European tour late last year. Great to see 'em back in action!

BLONDIE

ALL ABOARD FOR FUNTIME!

FUN! It's a word which keeps coming back when you try and describe Blondie - live or on record.

Their debut album is one of those records you can play anywhere, anytime, but 'specially at parties. Go to a gig and it's all aboard for fun-time!

Blondie are: Deborah Harry (vocals); Chris Stein (guitar); Gary Valentine (Bass); Clem Burke (drums); Jimmy Destri (keyboards).

They stress they're a group, although it's very likely it's only the peroxide Monroe pout of Deborah Harry you've seen in pictures. In fact you could be forgiven for thinking she IS Blondie, and just happens to have a backing band. Wrong. Debbie is the singer and with her looks an obvious visual figurehead so the publicity scales will obviously be tipped in her favour, but she and the guys are anxious you realise Blondie is a band, and they all contribute equally to the music . . .

. . . which is **GREAT!** All the great American pop styles rolled into one but fueled with the energy of the super soaraway seventies. Very American, 'specially the trashy 'B' movie lyrics - all about kung fu, giant ants and most of all sex/romance/love/lust, whatever you wanna call it. And they've got this uncanny knack of making the right sounds at the right time and making you sit right up, and play the album over and over and over.

Surprisingly, Blondie's first visit to this country wasn't the resounding success it should have been. And it wasn't their fault.

As you know they were playing first on the bill with Television. It was a tour of convenience, which according to Chris Stein went "tolerably well".

"Both bands happened to be in the country at the same time and the tour was just flung together", he says.

The two bands were s'posed to be equal-billed but it was obvious Blondie would come off worse playing to still-filling halls and crowds waiting to see who they thought were the headliners. Most of the critics seemed to be along for Television and after the predictable gushings over the guitar solos Blondie came as a sort of afterthought, a fact not helped by

their act being a killer in clubs but still getting used to working on big stages.

If only Blondie had been touring in their own right, playing at smaller venues they probably would have flown home a lot happier, and with a lot more good reviews under their waistbands. Don't get me wrong, a hell of a lot of kids loved 'em, there was an encore every night. But a lot more read the papers and got a wrong impression. I mean, Blondie are such a different kettle of fish to Television. The attitude seemed to be that Blondie are okay for a laugh if you've got back from the bar but Television are the ones furthering the advancement of rock, Art and the guitar solo as she is played by Tom Verlaine.

I think Tony Parsons was one of the only blokes to latch onto what the Blondies are about (which ain't surprising as he's one of the only rock press geezers worth reading). He said seeing Blondie was like hanging around an amusement arcade while Television made you feel like you were sitting in church. I was even afraid to fart. That's not to say Television are BAD - I like the album - but live they left me cold. Michelangelo might be a great painter but who'd wanna sit and watch him paint the Cistine Chapel. Blondie might splash their paint around but I defy anyone to keep a stiff leg or a straight face when they're on. Blondie are (wait for it) FUN. They're also better to watch.

The only time I saw Tom Verlaine move with any conviction was when I trod on his toe backstage at the Bristol gig.

Debbie Harry is great on stage. You never know what guise she'll come out in 'cos she never wears the same outfit twice. At Hammersmith it was black tights and leotard, while at Bristol it was a more street-ish pink shirt and tie and white drainpipes. She looks devastating whatever it is, and moves well too, strutting and high-kicking across the stage, even dropping dead (pretend!) at one point. They all look like they're having a great time up there, and I can assure you the fun extends off-stage too. At Bristol Clem Burke suddenly decided to wear the food spread out in the dress-

ing room. He attached slices of bread to each epaulette of his leather jacket and was just choosing what to garnish it with when gig-time stepped in and the jacket came off. (Maybe it'll catch on instead of safety pins? "It's inbreadable!" was Chris Stein's only comment.)

Anyway the gig proved a corker, and a hit with the Bristol audience, who, after being treated to most of the album, a knockout version of the Doors' "Moonlight Drive", and new stuff like the surging "Detroit" ("For Iggy!"), brought the Blondie's back for an encore. They managed to knock out a fantastic version of the Daytona's "Little G.T.O.", despite Gary Valentine having fallen down the steps off-stage 'cos he wasn't wearing his glasses.

I haven't felt the urge to play Television's album since that gig. Blondie's I play even more. TWICE a day now!

Deborah Harry was born in Miami, but moved to New Jersey at an early age. She started singing in the church choir at the age of eight but threw it in when she got to teenhood and started dating. Her middle-class parents had high hopes for young Debbie, who they sent to a girl's school for two years, but Debbie just wanted to sing in a rock'n'roll band, as they say.

However, her entry into the world of rock'n'roll was not auspicious. In fact it now sounds pretty embarrassing - a dark-haired Deborah Harry played finger cymbals and sang back-up vocals for a New Jersey hippie band called Wind in the Willows, who made an album in the late 60's.

"It was pretty awful", says Debbie. "That was baroque folk rock (they even had a bassoon player!) I didn't have anything to do with the music then. I was just a back-up singer."

The group toured around and made an unreleased second album which Debbie says was more rock'n'roll sounding "like the Mamas and the Papas". (Apparently copies of that first album are changing hands at much more than the bargain bin price tag it's had for the last few years. Bet if Blondie really takes off it'll be reissued with "featuring Debbie Harry" plastered all over the front.) WITW split in '68.

SCIENCE
BUILDING



Debbie lived in the East Village and got a job as a waitress at Max's. It was around the time the vintage Andy Warhol crowd were regular patrons, all the movie superstars, transvestites and assorted freaks.

"It was very exciting, and very picturesque and I met all the stars, served them their steaks. Most of them were so stoned they couldn't eat and still gave me five dollar tips. I'd wrap up the steaks and take them home. I had a great time."

A popular story is how young Debbie made it in a Max's phone booth with Eric Emerson, a seminary figure on the NYC rock scene (Chris Stein was later in his band the Magic Tramps).

Debbie's Max's stint ended when she ran off to California with a millionaire. Another teenage girl's fantasy fulfilled. "He was just a 'run of the mill' millionaire but it seemed like a good idea at the time. It was something I'd always wanted to do."

She lived in his Bel Air mansion for a month before she got fed up and hopped back to New York. By now Deb was well into hard dope - she did it for three years after WITW broke up - "For a long time I tried to blank blocks of my mind out."

Back in New York Debbie moved in with a dealer, then kicked junk, got into speed, moved away from the city and dove to an art community near Woodstock and then went back to her parents. Jobs she'd had up to now included bunny girl, beautician, health spa worker, secretary and assistant in New York's first head shop.

'Round about '72 Debbie got caught up in the New York rock explosion started by the Dolls. She went to lots of their early gigs still hankering after her own band. She heard about a local girl trio called Pure Garbage and spent a long time tracking them down, intent on joining. By the time Debbie had found one of the members, called Elda, Pure Garbage had bin and gone (sorry!) but Elda and Debbie decided to form a group. They enlisted one Rosie Ross and so were born the Stilettos, a trashy, tacky ensemble in the best Dolls tradition, which included Chris Stein, late of the Morticians and Magic Tramps.

Debbie: "Chris calls it the last of the glitter groups. It was a sort of campy Shangri-las, Supremes type of girl trio.

"We had a lot of fun but we weren't too musical, you know. The record companies at that time were not interested."

So the Stilettos split without making a record (shame). The only thing they left for posterity was a picture in Melody Maker, which was the first paper to pick up on what was going on in NYC at that time surprisingly enough.

When Debbie left the Stilettos in summer '73 she took the band with her which was: Chris Stein, Fred Smith (bass) and Billy O'Connor (drums). They played around as Angel or Snake and were soon joined by two blonde singers called Julie and Jackie. So they were called Blondie. Ivan Kral, who later went off to play keyboards for Patti Smith, was in the band for three months.

It took a long time for Blondie to get off the ground, find the right members and get a recording deal. "It didn't happen in the early days because we weren't formed musically



and we seemed always to be in a state of flux." Chris Stein: "I don't think any of the bands were really doing too much at that period. All the bands were fucking around, not really getting anywhere."

As in the Stilettos, having fun came before success for Blondie in the early days. After Ivan Kral left two more girl singers, Tish and Snookie, came in for a few months (they've now got a band called the Hot Boxes).

Chris: "We were having a good time and weren't really too career-orientated at the time."

Fred Smith "went on to bigger and better things" and joined Television.

Then Billy O'Connors left too. Forty drummers were auditioned, and Clem Burke, who'd been in a popular New Jersey band called Sweet Revenge, got the job. He brought in a New Jersey jamming companion Gary Valentine on bass.

By now it was August 1975. The finishing touch to the new Blondie came in the form of Jimmy Destri, who'd left Milk 'n' Cookies just before they came to England to make their Island LP.

Blondie were one of the first new wave of NY bands to get a record contract. They signed before Television and only after Patti Smith and the Ramones. The label that got 'em was Private Stock, which is owned by Frankie Valli. Before they were signed he came to see them at one of their regular New York gigs - CBGBs.

The Blondies, who in a year had worked up a tight, exciting stage set around the New York clubs, went into

Plaza studios with producer Richard Gottehrer and laid down the single "X Offender", then the album.

The single, (SE)"X Offender", was my first taste of Blondie and after hearing it I couldn't wait for the album. It's a Spector-fied blitz blend of "Born to run" and "ing", melodic organ topped with Debbie's unmistakable voice.

And yeah, the album lived up to that promise, kicking off with a different mix of the single (somewhere along the line the vocal had lost its echo), charging through another ten crackers, which ranged from the heart-melting "In the Flesh" to the high-speed, kick-'em-out rock of "Kung Fu Girls". In between you got the celebratory surf anthem "In the Sun", a sci-fi 'B' movie conga ("Return of the Giant Ants") and some straight-ahead pop songs, which snatched elements from many styles and periods of American radio pop - specially the "Nuggets" punk rock period of the mid-60's. That's mainly due to Jimmy Destri's versatile keyboards, which lift each track into something more exceptional.

There are a lot of influences at work but it's all stamped with the Blondie trademark of quality and topped with the distinctive voice of Deborah Harry which can cream or scream. Or in the case of "Rip it to Shreds", my fave track, cut through you like a sharpened steel comb. It's a catty hatchet job on a tarty chick ("look at those shoes!") Debbie explains: "It's about

gossip, catty gossip, and not only girls are guilty of it; boys are guilty of it too. Everyone gossips, it's a universal thing. Old people do it and young people do it and everyone does it.

"Y'see, everything that I do I've seen on TV and it's true. Radio is so inhibited now and TV is so broad and.. well, it's not that broad over here but it's broad in the States. I mean, from seven o'clock in the evening 'till eleven o'clock at night there's nothing on but murder, sex and violence, you know . . . God knows, it's all that sells."

Gary Valentine says the Blondies are trying to pick up where the 60's left off before they degenerated -

"If we're saying anything, we're saying have fun!" Well I've had more than my fair share with this group. Why don't you too, eh?

Back in March the Blondies got the proverbial break-of-a-lifetime which whisked them out of the small clubs onto the stages of big halls across the States - Iggy Pop asked them to open on the comeback tour he did with Mr. Bowie.

"They heard the record and asked us", said Chris. "It was great. They were real gentlemen to work with, very polite. They're real professionals, into the idea of a whole show with a first act. We were treated very well.

"What's good about Iggy is he draws people who love rock. Iggy was a pop artist from the start (s'cuse the pun!) and we're a pop band."

How much of the group is playing on sex rather than music 'cos obviously the reviews have come out heavily on

the sex side from time to time.

Chris: "I don't think we do it anymore than the Stones did with Mick Jagger. He was always a big sex symbol."

Don't you think you're appealing to a male audience more than a female audience, which is partially because of the way you look.

Debbie: "Guess that's the obvious interpretation. So many girls come up to me and say Great, keep going, do it, ya know. They say that to me. I'm not making enemies of girls, I'm making fans of girls."

Chris: "In Los Angeles there are girls who are adopting the look, the hair, the berets, and stuff like that. I think girls identify through Debbie. I always thought Mick Jagger was sexy. I've always been heterosexual and I've always sort of identified through him, you know as a big stud and I knew he could pick up all the girls he wanted."

Chris added that Debbie was "very pissed off" when the record company stuck a picture of her wearing a see-through blouse on the posters advertising the album . . . "It's not selling us in the right way."

At various times Debbie has intimated that she may revert back to her natural dark hair 'cos she's fed up doing her roots all the time. Trouble is, that'd cock up the name Blondie, wouldn't it?

Debbie: "Yeah, it seems that way . . . we decided to use the name Blondie and keep it when we got the band together finally because it had received some publicity and it's an easy name to remember and it's sort of descriptive and, you know, it just happened to work out to be a good name, but most of the time people imply it's too feminine,

pretty. Then I get tagged with it, and then they say the band, and you know, it's really a five-piece thing and we try to keep it that way. Well you get tired of bleaching your hair out. I've always had different coloured hair, you know, to try to stop with it now . . . I've been stuck with blonde hair for three years, I'm getting tired of it. If I lived in LA or Florida, where I was born, you spend a lot of time in the sun, it would stay light on its own but New York is mostly overcast."

The group can't understand the dopey reaction from some sections of the music press to their stage act.

"We're a little disappointed that the press is misinterpreting us, you know," said Debbie. They did it to us in the States and it took a while to catch on".

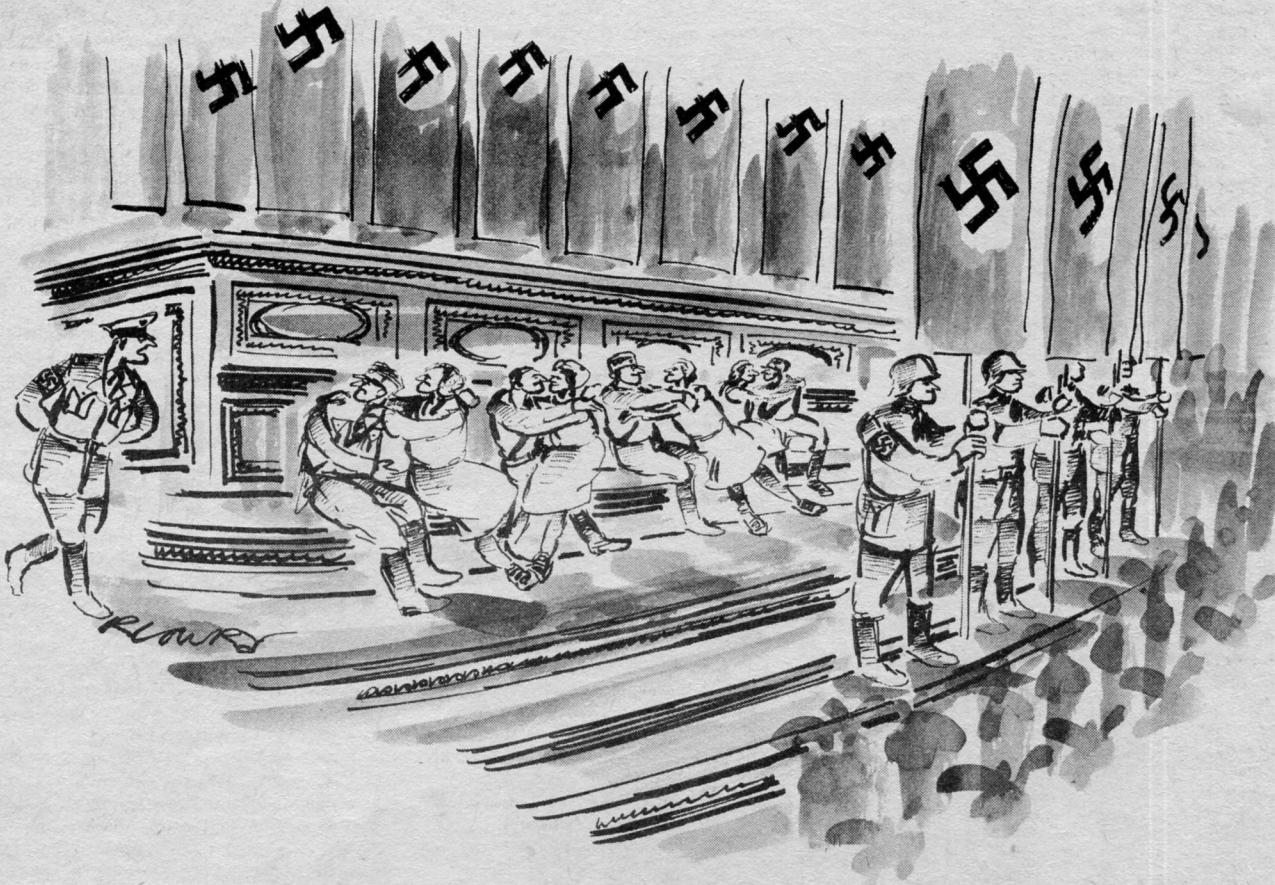
Adds Chris: "The thing is we've been getting really good responses. If we were getting bottles thrown at us and stuff it would be a different story, they'd be right, but we've got an encore every single show."

"Yeah, we get encores every single show and the press writes us up and puts us down. It's really unbelievable", says Debbie disconsolately.

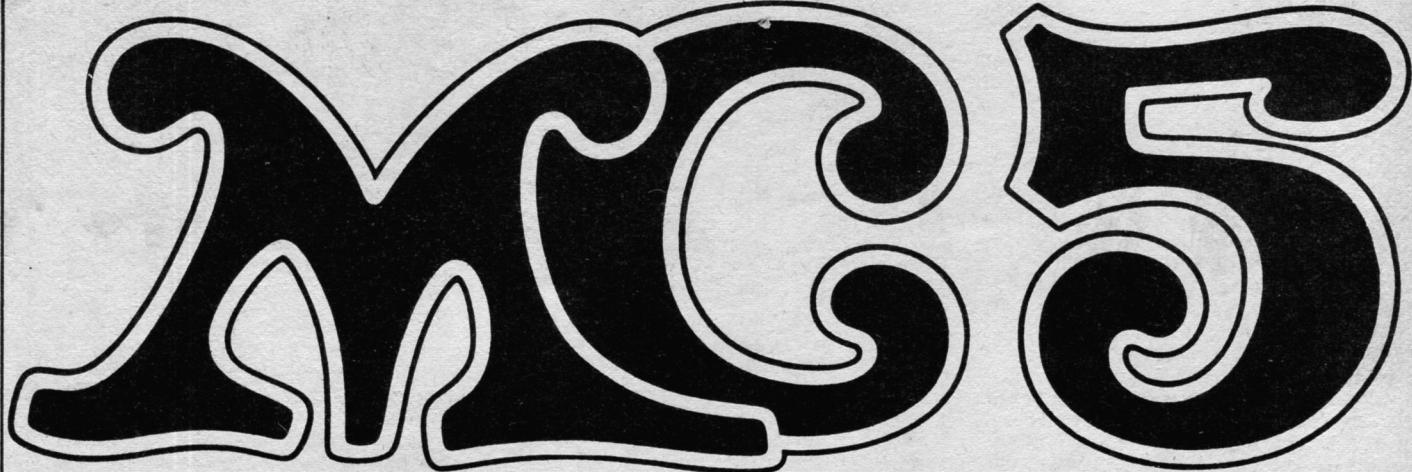
Still, they're coming back in the autumn. Maybe we'll all be ready for funtime. Go see 'em and decide for yourselves. I think you're gonna like it!

Debbie: "Yeah, we're coming back. We're flying over with bombs. We'll be back London!"

- Kris Needs
(Interviews by Kris and John Tobler)



"Well, well, well. We had no idea that this sort of thing was going on in the back rows of the Nuremberg rallies!"



In Summer 1969, JOHN SINCLAIR, former manager of the MC5, was put in prison for ten years for giving two joints to undercover narcotics cops. Before passing sentence, the judge (one Judge Colombo) said of Sinclair: "He represents a person who has deliberately flaunted and scoffed at the law".

In this, the concluding half of his "prison letters" (written to Zigzag during late 1969 and early 1970), John details the bitter decline of his relationship with the band, and the scenes behind the recently re-released albums 'Kick Out The Jams' and 'Back in the USA'.

I had always felt that we could "do our thing" - which was directly contrary to the established way of life - without bothering or bothering with the honks at large; that we could develop an alternate life-style and an alternative culture on our own, and that the honks would be glad to get rid of us, that they would even help us get our shit together so that they wouldn't have to be bothered with us anymore. But I found out that they depend on us too much to be able to let us go like that, and that they'll do almost anything to try to make us do things their way.

I should say that the band and I were in the same mind during this period - that they learned from me, and I learned from them - and it was a beautiful and total relationship which was entirely directed towards making a more exciting show, a more effective operation. We wanted eventually to establish our own record company, our own ballroom, our own booking agency, production company, and so on - so that we could help other bands grow, record and work, and so we could create the proper working conditions for the bands, the proper listening and grooving conditions for the people in the audiences. That was our "political" programme, and we were committed to it equally....or at least, that's what I felt at the time.

But the band wanted to deny all that later, wanted to forget that they once created the most exciting music and theatre that's ever taken place in America, and wanted just to pass into the mainstream of the pop-star industry. But the facts are that Tyner wrote the words, and the band worked out the music, and all of them got up on stage, night after night, and did the most incredible shit - because they loved doing it and the people loved to see and hear it. I encouraged them 100% because I loved every minute of it.

If anything, I would be trying to

hold them down....like talking them out of saying "motherfucker" when the club-owners or the police had threatened us with non-payment or arrest or expulsion....we couldn't afford any of that if we wanted to keep playing and reaching the people, not to mention paying off the equipment.

It was different at the Grande Ballroom in Detroit up until June 7th 1968, but after that Russ Gibb was like all the other club-owners, making really ridiculous demands of us which we refused to accept.

The next time we played there, on June 23rd with Blue Cheer, Russ's partner Gabe Glantz told us we were no longer on the bill - because of the flag-tearing, nudity and obscenity. We had to fight it out with Russ and his attorney for two hours before he finally relented. And even then, it took Blue Cheer's manager, Gut, to come down to Russ's office and say that his band wouldn't play if the MC5 were dropped from the bill. We still had to guarantee that there would be no flag burning, no more naked on the stage, and so on....but we would not agree to censor 'Kick out the jams, motherfucker' at the Grande. That would have been sacrilege.

That was the last time we played the Grande for 3 months.....until we came back on September 21 and 22, heading the bill over Ted Nugent & the Amboy Dukes. We drew over 1800 people.

The band, at that time and for months afterwards, were into smashing their equipment at the end of 'Comm' - because that was the only logical conclusion to that monster energy explosion....but I kept trying to talk them out of it - not because it wasn't valid, because it was and I loved it, but because we just couldn't afford to keep getting the amps repaired every week. It was all we could do to meet the payments on the equipment - and all our income, above and beyond the rent/groceries/transport payments, went into more and more equipment.

No-one ever had any spending money at all; we budgeted everything strictly so we could buy more and more equipment. I handled all the money and all the business - with the band's advice and consent. We were all living together in one big house in Ann Arbor, at 1510 Hill Street, where we'd moved in June '68 to get away from the concentration camp/police state atmosphere that had enveloped our neighbourhood in Detroit after the riot celebrations of 1967, and the riot scare after the assassination of

Martin Luther King a year later.

The band fixed up a practice room, but refused to practise....and they stopped writing new material. Then, after we went to Chicago and participated in the Conspiracy To Create Riots at the Democratic Convention by playing for free in Lincoln Park on August 25th, it seemed they just got lazier and lazier.

At about this time - late summer of 1968 - two major changes went down. Brother JC Crawford joined the band, and we were "discovered" by Danny Fields of Elektra Records, who signed us to a contract and got us enough money to temporarily take us out of the hole we were in financially. Also, we'd started booking through Mike Quatro's eager-beaver agency and were getting more and better jobs, and more money all the time. Quatro had always known a good thing when he saw it, and he got us the gigs and the bread we wanted....and in that way, he helped build up the whole scene (through no foresight of his own, I'd say, but through his greed and avarice. He could make more bread that way, but incidentally it helped the bands and the scene). It was OK by me; because the people I'd been dealing with before - Jeep Holland and Russ Gibb - had seemed intent on holding the scene down to a level which they could understand and control....the small-time hick level.

The addition of JC Crawford made a change in the band in two important ways: when he started announcing and carrying on before the band came on stage, it heightened the feeling of the big stage show and raised the energy level of the whole affair, since he was such a high energy dude. On the negative side, JC's wildness and party going ways influenced the band and destroyed their internal discipline. I had kept them under a pretty firm disciplinary hand, because they were always wild and crazy and tended to get even crazier. I tried to keep their minds and bodies on the music and the show and the whole cultural scene at all times.

Their dissatisfaction with the home scene at 1510 Hill Street (which in many ways boiled down to a tremendous clash in personalities between Wayne's and Rob's ladies on the one hand, and my Trans-Love revolutionary women on the other), and the emergence of JC as a social force in our community, combined to take them off into the ozone....they started getting drunk after gigs, partying when they weren't working, drinking at home, and even on their way to gigs. It got to the point where they were just generally



breaking discipline altogether.

I started getting more and more pissed off at them because of this - primarily because their show had stopped improving, the music wasn't growing and expanding any more, and I knew it was just a matter of time before they would disintegrate completely.

They were dissatisfied about their money, about lack of recognition, all of that, and they started blaming me - even though I was doing everything I could to create better conditions all round. The broads complained about their lack of money too, and you can be sure that helped a lot.

The Elektra contract came at the end of September 1968 - and the peak of their discontent. Just before Danny Fields came out to hear the 5 and sign them up, we had a decisive argument. We were returning from a manufacturer's party, which we had attended to look at some new equipment. The band had all drunk a lot of alcohol at the party, and I was pissed off as usual. They started attacking me on the way home, telling me that they were tired of living with my Trans-Love Energies crowd, and demanding that they be allowed to get a house of their own. I really got pissed off at that, and told them it was fine by me - that they could move out just as soon as they could afford it. I also told them that if they didn't start taking their work more seriously, I didn't want any more to do with them anyway....they could get a new manager and a whole new business operation, because I wasn't interested in playing nursemaid to a bunch of drunks.

Within a week, we had the Elektra contract and some front money (20 thousand dollars) with which we paid off all our outstanding bills and got some new equipment, costumes, and other things we'd needed for some time. Then everything was pointed towards recording the album live at the Grande, and working out the packaging of the record and the advertising campaign.

We were getting more money for our local jobs, and in December 1968 started travelling out of town - first to Boston and New York and Connecticut and Cleveland, and later (when the record was released) to California. We also continued to work around Detroit and Michigan during this time, drawing bigger and bigger crowds.

The band started looking for a new house, but ended up staying with us for another six months before they finally got it together to buy a house in the country. The money was better most of the time, but it still went on equipment and transportation mostlywe leased a 1½ ton truck for the gear, and finally acquired 3 sets of Marshall amps and a custom-built, 25

thousand dollar pa system.

Meanwhile, JC had calmed down a little and had started taking on more responsibilities with the band. His raps before the band took the stage got farther and farther out (that intro on the Elektra album was only the beginning), and by the time the album came out we had organised the White Panther Party - JC, Pun Plamondon, Skip Taube, and myself. We also had Rudnick and Frawley in New York, and Gary Grimshaw in California, where he was hiding out from the legal authorities from Michigan.

I still wasn't happy with the band's development at the time. They were still drinking and carousing a lot, especially when we started travellingand they'd stopped practising altogether. They didn't work out any new material and their stage show, since the music had stopped growing, had also stagnated to the point where they were making the same moves and the same jumps in every show. Also, they started criticising what we were doing in the White Panther Party, and wanted themselves disassociated from everything we were doing in that sphere.

I remember when I wrote the liner notes (which never appeared) for the Elektra album, in a hotel room in Cambridge Massachusetts on our first road trip, I was talking to the band itself, rather than to the public. I was trying to get them to understand that they were really a lot more than just another rock band, and that they had a tremendous responsibility to the people which went beyond just playing stage shows and carousing and carrying on. Their attitude could best be described as thoroughly ambivalent; they would be deep into revolutionary consciousness one day and drunk the next.

When we were on the road, I would spend all my time running around whichever city we were in, doing radio interviews, pushing the record, lining up benefits and concerts to supplement the weekend gigs, meeting people, checking out the underground papers in the various cities, and trying to explain to the Movement people just exactly what we were doing - that we weren't just another rock'n'roll band exploiting the people and fattening Bill Graham's pocket.

The band, on the other hand, would sit around their motel rooms all day long, complaining that there was nothing to do, or hanging out with the skonkiest broads in town and getting the clap some more, staying drunk and partying and getting arrested for drunk driving (as in San Francisco). I started staying away from them more and more, leaving the road manager's duties to JC and Steve the Hawk.

Of course, during this period, we

were hassling with Elektra all the time too - and that contributed to the band's alienation from me and from the organization. Elektra had encouraged us to record the "motherfucker" version of 'Kick Out The Jams' - although I had insisted that we record the "brothers and sisters" version too....so we could get it played on the radio. They also dug my sleeve notes, and printed them up.

I felt that Elektra were going a little too far out with the whole album project, but I figured that if they would stand behind the record, and package and advertise and promote it properly, we could surmount any obstacles the honks might throw up in front of us. As it worked out, Jac Holzman, the Elektra president, had undertaken the whole project with considerable naivete and without anticipating any trouble. I knew better, and thought he did too, but he figured that the national honko consciousness had risen above an occasional "motherfucker". When Bill Drake, the national AM-radio station programmer, doused the record in his weekly sheet because of the "obscene" word and the revolutionary stance of the MC5, Holzman shit his pants - and when the big record distribution chains said they weren't prepared to carry the album as it was, the roof caved in on him. He called a conference and came out to Ann Arbor to discuss the issue with us. In the meantime, he had fired Danny Fields from his position as publicity director at Elektra, because Danny had assumed too much power in the organisation and was, in fact, almost running the company - at least in several important areas like corporate image. Holzman explained the developments in the business world to us, and suggested that they put out an alternative version of the record with the "brothers and sisters" version instead of the offending "motherfucker". The alternative, he said, was that we wouldn't get mass distribution and wouldn't make any money.

Well, all of us, including the band, were dead set against it, and we told Holzman and his vice-president, Bill Harvey (who was responsible for the nasty cover on the album) that we would rather just put everything behind the original version of the album and work for its popularity to the extent that the kids would demand that their stores carry it - just as we had with our show. We proved that businessmen will provide their consumers with anything as long as it made them money....no matter how much they hated our show, they knew that we would pack their joints and make them a lot of money. We had plenty of scenes where the local police and city officials tried to douse our appearances, but the honko club-owners

stood up for us - not because we were right, but because they could make a pile of money off our dances and our concerts. We knew, at least I knew, that the same principle would work on a national level with the record, but Holzman punked out - even after he told us that he wouldn't change after all.

When we were in California, we saw the censored version that was put out without our consent - no liner notes at all, and the single, "censored" version of 'Kick ou the jams!'. It was only a short time after that, that Jac Holzman offered to release us from the Elektra contract - and we gladly accepted his kind offer.

The biggest mistake we'd made - and all bands might check this out - was not writing into the contract the things we had to have - control over production, packaging and advertising. We were swept by the "hipness" and good feelings of Danny Fields (who remained OK for some time) and Holzman, and took their word for it that we would be able to retain control over our recorded product. When I signed them to Atlantic later that Spring, all of that was written into the contract, and Danny Fields and I got the band a 50 thousand dollar advance in cash, against a 6% royalty.

I knew by this time that the band was alienated from what we were doing with The White Panthers, but I kept hoping they would wake up one day and realise what was going down. They never did. In fact, they kept going further in the other direction. As the band got more national publicity and exposure, the industry people started getting to them more and more, it seemed, trying to convince them that they would have to give up their "political", revolutionary stance altogether if they planned to make it big in the biz. This fit right in with their own fears - that they had worked this long and this hard only to be denied their rightful position as a s*t*a*r band - because their manager had mis-led them and had got them to do all the wrong things....and they began to plot their break from me, Trans-Love and the Panthers.

Their greatest help came from the courts; I was able to spend less and less time with them, as I had to spend more and more of it in court or else in jail. First there was an assault charge in Oakland County, where the jury found me guilty and Fred Smith innocent - even though he was the one who had jumped on the police when they were beating me.

Then there was the arrest at the Port Huron-Sarnia border, on the way to a gig in Sarnia, where the Canadian officials had been told to expect us by the Detroit Narcotics Bureau. They denied me entry into Canada - following which, the US customs officials arrested me for "leaving the United States without registering as a convicted narcotics violator". They held me in the St Clair County Jail for 3 days.

Then the Oakland County pigs cut my hair off - three years growth - while I was waiting for a bondsman to come and bail me out. Then the Detroit trial started, was postponed, started again, was declared a mistrial, started again, and ended in my conviction and sentence. I got ten years for possession of marijuana.... and that, of course, is why I'm in prison right now.

This period of court harassment started on April 1st 1969, and went on until July 25th, when I was locked up for good by punk-ass Colombo in Detroit.

It coincided with the first recording sessions for the MC5's second album, which started in Los Angeles the last week in March, at Elektra's studio there. Then they transferred to GM Studios in Detroit - under the auspices of Atlantic Records, with Jon Landau producing.

During this period, the band had made it known to me that they wanted to change our financial arrangement, and we started talks (when we weren't travelling or I wasn't in court) to discuss the nature of the changes to be made.

Since there was a distinct possibility that I would be incarcerated by the law, we also decided to spread my responsibilities out within the organisation. I was trying to bring in more people so we could start developing more bands, get them contracts and records out, start producing shows, and so on. I convinced Rudnick and Frawley to move to Ann Arbor, and I helped them get jobs at a local radio station, WABX (who soon afterwards banned me from the air for being "too political").

Danny Fields was going to handle national publicity, and we had other people more or less co-ordinating the whole thing. We were also starting to produce films; the first was done by my wife and I, and featured the MC5 - using 'Kick Out The Jams!' as a sound track. It was meant for underground movie-house screening.

At Danny's urging, I arranged for a dude named David Newman to come in and take over the band's financial work, starting June 1st - when our new money arrangement came into effect....and by this time, Landau had moved out to the band's new house in Hamburg, Michigan, to prepare for the Atlantic album.

It was soon after this that the band, urged on by Newman and Landau, conspired to ease me out of the picture altogether....despite the fact that we had agreed on new terms - with Trans Love taking a straight 20% manager's fee.

We held more talks, and they made a new offer: I was to get 15% of all bookings and personal appearances, 20% of any Elektra royalties (which had all been consumed by advances and various costs anyway), and 0% of any forthcoming Atlantic royalties! This figure was arrived at, they said, because I had nothing to do with getting the Atlantic contract....that Danny had been solely responsible, and that I didn't deserve any of it! I couldn't believe it, and I tried to figure out what could make them think that way....but they couldn't relate to anything I said, and eventually ended up offering me a whole 5% on the Atlantic deal.

I had to explain that I didn't care about the money especially, and never had, but it was hard to believe that they could forget the past so easily. They seemed to think that they'd come all that way unaided, and it really set me back....I could hardly believe what they were saying - but they were dead serious about the whole thing. I left the house that night, knowing that things would never be the same again - and from then on, we moved farther and farther apart. Landau

had a lot to do with it, I think. He came out there and undermined their confidence; ruined their whole musical outlook by telling them that what they were doing was all wrong, and that what they needed was to take everything apart and put it back together very simply....in short, to give up every gain they'd made in electronic technology and power and total energy playing, and turn back to a clean, uncluttered super-simple style which would compare with the studio guys at Stax-Volt or something.

Now, that form of music is perfectly valid and often exciting in its own right, but the MC5 had developed the most powerful and all-inclusive attack in the history of music as far as I was concerned (except for maybe the John Coltrane/Pharoah Sanders/Archie Shepp attack) - and this punk Landau wanted them to give all of that up. What was worse was that Wayne agreed with him, and everyone else at least went along with it (although I did hear that Fred Smith finally revolted against Landau during the recording sessions - which, incidentally, took several months instead of the two or three weeks I had originally envisaged).

Between Landau, who convinced them that my musical and performance ideas were all wrong, and David Newman, who convinced them that I had mis-managed their money for two years and fucked everything up for them financially, the 5 turned against me completely and hardly wanted to speak to me any more. JC suffered the same fate, and was fired by the band just after I was locked up. They said he wasn't useful anymore since they had "grown out of" the stage where they needed an announcer like that - and besides, he was too good a musician himself to waste himself doing stuff like that. So they gave him a set of drums, in one of their big humane gestures, and kicked him out of their tight new organisation.

Rudnick, who had planned to work with them promotionally and otherwise, was cut loose too, and Danny Fields, who served briefly as their manager (after I was gone) before he quit, was cut loose financially too.

They finished up their album (which I had satirically titled 'Back In The USA', and which came to mean just that - in a straight-forward not satirical sense), and signed a management contract with Joe Cocker's manager, Dee Anthony - hoping thereby to pass into the mainstream of the pop star establishment.

Well, here I am, locked up in the clink - and I keep reading interviews with the MC5 where they insist on totally disassociating themselves from the past - as though there were something wrong with what they used to be, something illegitimate which might somehow be held against them by the powers-that-be in the rock'n'roll industry. But it should be clearly stated and understood, as it was and is by the people who took part in that period of Detroit rock'n'roll history, that there has never really been anything like the MC5 of those days - neither musically, nor in terms of the intensity and the purity of the people's response to them.

It was really far out. If they hadn't been so greedy and so eager for the easy fame of the pop star world they could have been a really historic phenomenon.

John Sinclair

gabba gabba hey?

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Incidentally, if you're still wondering about "gabba gabba hey"*, check out 'Pinhead' from the album "The Ramones Leave Home".

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ROD S: RAMPANT AGAIN

HUNG-OVER FROM THE VORTEX, ZIGZAG'S DOPEY DUO STILL MANAGE TO HURL A FEW SIMPLE QUESTIONS AT BUBBLING-OVER BARRIE MASTERS...

My bedroom backs on to the route home from some of the best pubs in London, and if I'm in, I have to wait 'till the procession is through before I can get any kip, (and that's LATE, you won't get chucked out at no eleven on this side of the city). Now when the lads are staggering home, they'll either disturb me by rucking or like as not that cats' chorus singin', arms linked for support, to one or other of the alehouse standards, y'know Maggie May, HiHo Silver Lining, Tiger Feet, that lot. The other night a mob-handed crew come along and from out of the rabble of the verse came a gutsy chorus..."Why don't you ask them/what they expect of you/Why don't you tell them/what you are gonna do... Do anything you wanna do. Do anything you wanna do." Now if you come out of a pub in the Old Kent Road with anything else than the dugga dugga dugga of Donna Summer stuck in your brain, then that record has got to be a killer. A cut throat. Worse thing about that night was I had no idea of this track they were saying was, 'fuckin' triffik, Dave' and 'gotta get it temorra'.

Know now though, don't I?

Kris Needs went over to Island's offices in Hammersmith to cassette it up with Barrie Masters, and the three of us talked in their interview room and the beer never arrived.

ZZ: The singles a real change in direction...

BM: Yeah. We're rehearsing really hard now for the new album, but it's so much easier 'cos the songs are so much better, and it just came about that we did the track and said, like, THAT'S A SINGLE, that is a fucking single, I mean the one before that was just like a stopgap when we was poncin' around, so much to do and nothing was being done for us."

ZZ Yeah, how is it with Island now?

BM: Ah it's great, 'salright now. That was just after that last tour, the one after the English tour. We were gettin' hassled by the pigs'n' that and basically it was down to communication problems and things that just weren't bein' done. So we were ready for a big row or somethin' 'cos all the time we were getting these offers from other companies, really tempting, and nothing gettin' done here. Anyrate, what it all boiled

down to was that it was three geysers who were cocking up, doing things but always at the wrong times and we don't take shit at all y'know. We can just as easy come and turn an office over like, but these three are not here any more in any case. We came in once and they were just gone. Nah, there's no shitters here now, it's a great place and they really help us.

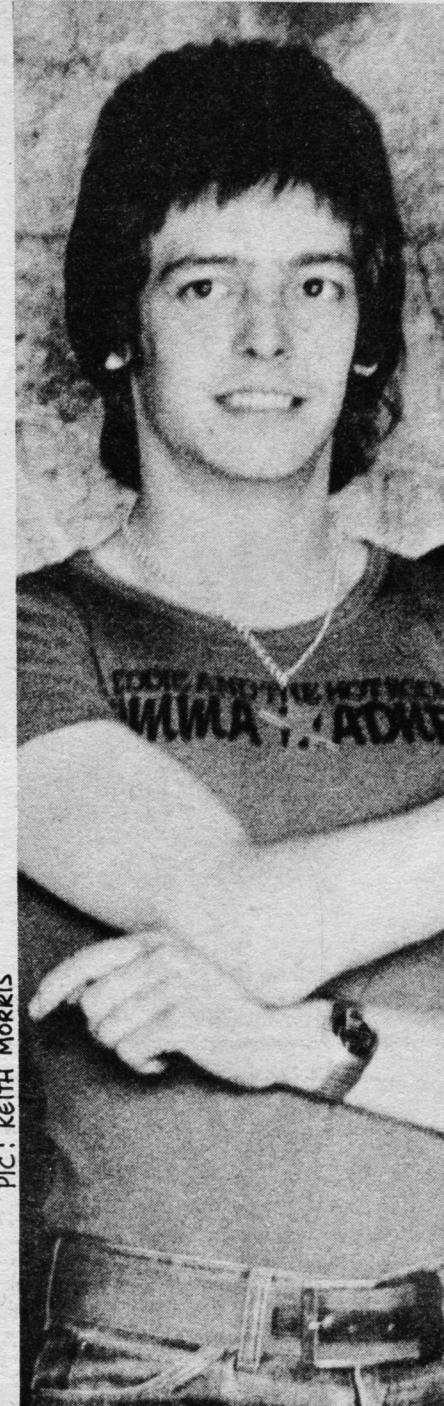
ZZ: How do you see feeling towards you now from kids?

BM: Well it's turned again 'cos they can see we're not pretendin' to come on strong and having to say, like, get up an' that. When we play we don't have to say nothing, it's all there, unlike groups who have to shout at 'em between songs. There's arrogance and ignorance, right? But we've played at places where the pool table gets more applause than you do, local places round our way when we'd get ignored we'd end up tearin' the place up. So when you hear punks talking about hostile audiences all I can say is if ya can't handle it then you shouldn't be up there. A front man should be able to handle it.

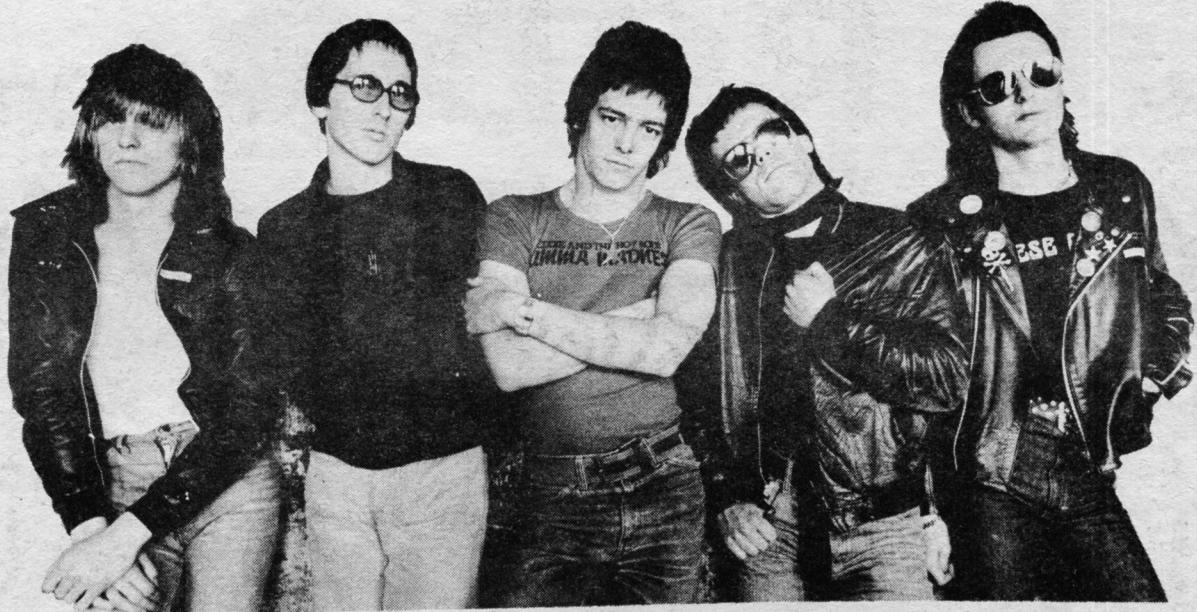
ZZ: So how does the Rainbow come across?

BM: Well, with us, it don't matter about the size of a place, there's certain gigs that'll come over anyway, but that last Rainbow...the heavies. I mean, I saw a couple with no heaviness or nothing just get up and this big bouncer goes 'whack' right in the chest for no reason. So when I saw that I thought right...and at the end of the gig I had nothing to throw at 'em so I threw myself... I dived on two of 'em...wallop...'cos there's no need at all for what they do. I know the seats got done, but that's not a conscious thing. We're a good time rock'n'roll band and it just happens. The happier I see people the more I'm gonna keep on, 'cos before we go on I always like to check out what audience we've got in, but it's never group here-audience here-you're gonna enjoy it or else. It's like a big party y'know? That's why I can never understand why some groups use a gig as a showcase for the band. We're all together.

Now what we wanna do is do another big French tour, then maybe Belgium, Switzerland and a lot in Germany, and come back here and try and avoid the same old halls...not totally avoid the



PIC: KEITH MORRIS



SIMON NICOL

DAVE HIGGS

BARRIE MASTERS

GRAHAM DOUGLAS

PAUL GRAY

cities but do a massive thing with all the towns so kids don't have to travel.

ZZ: Could you go the seven nights a week?

BM: Oh yeah. We did 250 gigs last year, more than any other band I think.

ZZ: So being on the road don't affect you?

BM: The first two weeks. If you're gonna collapse it's the first two weeks and so long as the harder you work the harder you party you're OK, as long as you don't shut down after a gig...just bevvie it up and come down slowly.

ZZ: Has Graham brought in a country influence because of the Kursaals? (Graham Douglas recently joined the Rods on second guitar.)

BM: Oh no, no. Y'see, that's why he joined us, because he wanted to be in a rock'n'roll band and was so pissed off with playing in a cabaret band. It was funny on the last tour they did because he was gettin' into more rows and more rows, with him saying to the rest, y'know, just fuckin' move! 'Cos even their 'rock' numbers are ballads, and on stage they'd be with that limp presentation and he'd be going mad and smashing the amps at one side while the others's just turn and look in amazement, and afterwards it was 'don't talk to him' and sulking. I mean you go with any band before a gig and they'll be doing up whatever's there, but go into the Kursaals' room and there's some bloke playing Bali Hai on that thing that sounds like cats (Pedal steel) and Paul Shuttlecraft designing settees.. weird.

ZZ: How controlled are the Rods on stage?

BM: Well obviously you try and plan it but you're bound to get carried away, we know that, and on the end of a tour me voice starts to play up. I did it in once really heavy and I was supposed to knock it off for four months 'cos I split some chord in me throat, I dunno, and I got real paranoid 'cos you hear about permanent damage, but even then you go out on a gig and start off takin' it easy 'till ya get so worked up you think 'ah bollocks' and don't think about it. For me, anyway, it's not like

I'm workin', I'm just having a good time, like at the Rainbow when I jumped offstage - done me arm in and smashed me head'n'that - but I just don't give a fuck, y'know? The reaction gets you so vibed up you don't think, 'specially during an 'ard bastard like Denver, if I stop during that I get this 'orrible flashing in front of me eyes and I'm sure I'm gonna collapse...that's how our theatre act started when I'd just go 'Ahhh' and fall over!

ZZ: D'ya still do the old numbers?

BM: Nah, not hardly so much now. It's new numbers, a lot faster, more like that clean sound of the MC5 I s'pose. Of course with two guitarists it's so much fuller. That's the best bit about Graham, he's got so much stage presence no matter what happens. His guitar strap broke towards the end of a set once and it was flailing about his head and he used it to feed back on, just darting about to get these sounds. People say it can get too full, but we've never bothered about perfect this or perfect that we just do it. We're just rock'n'roll.

ZZ: How do you see the next couple of years?

BM: Well, it's exciting 'cos it's so fast moving. Look at the last two. It's good to know the songs are gonna get better, I can't wait. The only way I can see it is like the Who and the Stones 'cos we're keeping rock'n' roll but branching off.

ZZ: You're lookin' forward to the Marquee dates, then?

BM: Yeah right. That's gonna be a hot place though, fuck me. We're restricting the crowd this time to seven hundred a night. Last time it was ridiculous with people paying money to stand by the cash desk. We had twelve hundred and sixty two in and that's the record, people flat out, fainted and I collapsed in the middle of "On the Run" in the dressing room, and at the end everyone swarmed on the stage...they didn't care no more. That live marquee EP has such a vibe y'know, I mean I still play it 'cos it makes me think...fuck that's great.

ZZ: It's Reading too straight after. Do you like open airs?

BM: We did one in Finland last week where we shouldn't have got outa bed. Tear Gas and everything.

ZZ: How come?

BM: Oh things like hire cars not turning up and our flight got cancelled, then a poxy plane broke down on the runway, so we had to do a real round flight, thru Sweden, all dinners and drinks free 'cos they'd fucked us up so much. Anyrate, at the gig eight and a half thousand turned up, and Finland is four females to every male, so afterwards we come out of the dressing room and it's (snaps fingers) and they follow us back to the hotel. The bouncers didn't think we ought to party and rows are going on and a glass door got shattered when some bloke tried to shut it on Graham's foot, when they bring out of their pockets these aerosol cans and start spraying it about at us. At first you don't know what it is 'till it burns and your face swells up. I thought it was acid at first, they were just cunts...but I wish I had a can of it then it don't matter how many you're faced with, I could have done with some for them Rainbow heavies.

ZZ: How do you react to the press?

BM: Oh I don't really. Everyone knows the British press loves to build 'em and knock 'em down. I think it's just a few influential writers who get crazes that others latch onto until it's heard that that trend is boring. I don't care who slags us so long as it's the truth as they see it and not fashionable. You get writers who wait to the party after to find out, all the time. A lig. Record Mirror said the other week that we're over the hill at twenty! We loved that, 'cos it's such a wanky plastic paper and they thought by slagging us early they'd be in first, but everyone else went the other way of course. That was really funny.

If the Rods needed any kind of affirmation that they still got plenty to say and still mean a sight more than most young bands now, there's plenty of blokes round here to join in the chorus if they should ever crawl the borough.

Are they open?

- Danny Needs

Criminals on the loose

by Ellen Callahan

Syl: Is it on?
Ellen: Yeah... Don't press that or it won't record.
S: Oh I see... well that's good.

E: You wanna leave it off?

S: Put it back on, OK?

S: I put it back on... I swear!

says Syl, his voice taking on the quavering quality of a wrongly accused school boy. Even though he sounds innocent enough, I check to see if the tape is still running. After all, why should I trust a Criminal?

• • •
The Criminals, in case you haven't heard, are Sylvain Sylvain's new band. They consist of Syl on lead vocals and guitar, Bobby Blane on keyboards, Tony Machine on drums, and Mike Page on guitar. With the exception of Mike Page, all three Criminals are former N.Y. Dolls. (I'll spare you those tempting "Gone from Dolls to Criminals" comments.)

Unlike many other current N.Y. bands, (noted for their starkly primitive approach), The Criminals are slick and theatrical. They are performers in every sense of the word and Syl tells me he'd like to try his hand at acting someday. (I think he'd be great.) Syl's got a lot of what directors call "stage presence," and he fills his newly acquired position of front man with an energetic, audience-engaging ease. Syl likens the Criminals to a Las Vegas show and says he plans to incorporate a variety of additional dimensions to the band's act, including modern jazz dancers and sound effects. (This I gotta see...)

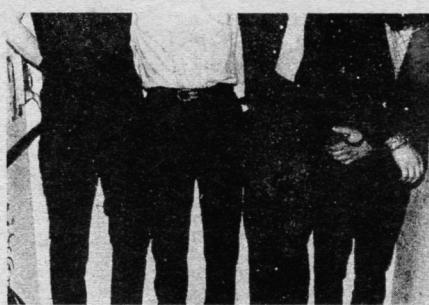
The Criminals are well rehearsed, proficient and musically solid, certainly no denying that the band knows what they're doing. Before hearing them, Syl informed me, with characteristic cheerful confidence, that the Criminals have "something for everyone." Despite my initial disbelief (and intuitive mistrust of such Madison Avenue braggadocio) it seems Syl's claim is correct. Without suffering from a lack of direction that often plagues groups that try to please everyone, the Criminals come close to doing just that.

Their set opens with a tight version of Henry Mancini's "Peter Gunn" theme, which The Criminals have dubbed "The Cops are Coming". This jazzy rocker provides a thematic backdrop for what's to come, setting the stage for an aura of rowdy, but good-natured, hoodlum bravado that is sure to become the group's trademark. Now if television theme songs don't turn you on, "Deeper and Deeper" has a fresh but Fifties R'n'B sound. My personal fave is "The Kids Are Back," a bouncy tune with a decidedly British lilt. There's more: "Baby Without You," a nightclubby ballad, and "Rockin' Good Time," a rousing rock anthem. All of this diversity works because it is unified by a firm foundation of energy and professionalism.



Gary Green

Syl invited me to the band's practice loft on W. 30 St. Unfortunately I get there too late to listen so we leave for Syl's apartment in the band's van, not surprisingly, a converted paddy wagon. On the way downtown, Syl asks me if I like boxing. He likes it a lot and he proceeds to provide me with an animated description of a Puerto Rican boxer he recently watched. Later on, during the interview, Syl makes another reference to boxing. This time he draws in the Criminals. "We're the underdogs of rock 'n' roll, but we're gonna beat the champs at their own game. Well you know, if you got ten-to-one odds, you gotta be smart and you gotta know when to hit the upper rights and the lower lefts. Timing... that's what's important." *Rocky*, here we come...



Bob Gruen



Bob Gruen



Bob Gruen

The Criminals cite some of their influences as The Bowery Boys, Popeye cartoons and *Our Gang* comedies. "More than Chuck Berry and Bill Haley and the Comets" says Syl. "Basically, we wanna go all the way." He adds, "we want to do Broadway shows and movie themes... Anything and everything... And a lotta hit records."

Of course, one can't resist asking Syl about the Dolls' break up. "We didn't really break up," he insists. "We just never went any place 'cause basically I wasn't in control of the situation, and obviously no one else wanted to do anything or else we would have... The Dolls were like five freaks, 5 individual leaders going off in our own directions. Even when we played we all had our own audiences... But me, Bobby and Tony worked real hard trying to pull something together... We were always told 'Hey, we're gonna go in the studio and make an album'... but it just never happened... So we decided to go our own ways."

I ask Syl if differences in musical direction didn't help split up the Dolls but he says they did not. "Actually," he explains, "I was just frustrated being a guitarist and side man for so long. I always thought I had it in me to do the front and I wanted to give it a try... I guess as an artist I just felt frustrated and I finally got sick enough to start something new." Syl is adamant though, that he tried to make things work and despite the group's internal conflicts, the Dolls "were still the biggest draw." He tells me that the photograph of the crowded line on the cover of the *Live at Max's* album was taken at a Dolls' gig.

The Dolls weren't Syl's only experience with a Rock and Roll band that almost broke—but didn't. "The first time was in 1967 with this group called The Pox on Atlantic Records (we were advertised "Go catch the Pox" Syl recalls.) "We were gonna go in and make a record but our lead singer freaked out on a girl and left for California. That was the end of our big career."

Syl's less-than-perfect past experiences haven't undermined his passion for success, however, and he is quite optimistic about the Criminals and their future. "This whole time has been a preparation for what's happening to me now. And what's gonna happen to us as the Criminals. We're gonna be a movement. It hasn't started yet—but it will."

The Criminals aren't visionary and metaphysical like Television or powerfully unique like the Ramones, but they are an entertaining, highly professional rock 'n' roll act that will certainly add a great deal of color and fun to the New York club scene. This band knows what it wants—success, and I think they're gonna get it. Of the group's name, Syl said "I call the band the Criminals 'cause it's a really meaningful word. I mean you gotta go out there and take what you want... Ain't nobody gonna give it to ya." With a credo like that the rest of the rock world better beware. Looks like the Criminals are on the loose.

THE ADVERTS

the lawyers to call that doctor and, ah, just tell him simply: "You got 'em! Gary Gilmore." Or maybe we can give him a live one...



rural oaf in Georgia even sent me a hunk of rope. There's no f...

... could use. I don't think the heart will be usable. [Laughs]

eve of his execution, debate by demanding hi...

UANN GILMUL

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THESE TWO PIX: CRYSTAL CLEAR

TESSA

There are few groups I'd rather go and see at the moment than The Slits.

They've only been going a few months in their present form - Ari Up (vocals); Viv (guitar); Tessa (bass); Palmolive (drums). They think it's the ideal lineup. The potential is enormous.

The Slits are out on their own, proving almost singlehandedly that girls can form a group and play hard, vital music without relying on their attributes to get away with musical murder. They may not keep perfect time and time, or play catchy tunes you can hum in the Roxy toilet. It's their raw, unchanneled energy, uninhibited abandon and unrelenting attitude, coupled with half an hour of strong, personal songs that makes them one of the most hard-hitting but enjoyable live experiences around. And you know they can only improve, which they are in leaps and bounds when the equipment works and the sound is right.

Mass audiences got their first major dose of The Slits when they supported The Clash on the White Riot tour. Ari Up, Viv, Tessa and Palmolive would come on first out of the four and bombard the just-arrived crowds

with sharp, aggressive songs like "Drug Town", "Love and Romance", "Shoplifting", "Let's do the Split" and "Vaseline".

Wrapped in a huge, dirty old flasher's mac, Ari would stamp, scream and rage in frustrated tantrums when the sound went wrong, letting loose impassioned, eye-bulging vocals when it went right. Ari's great. She's 15 and has had no rock'n'roll conditioning, just gets up and does it.

Each song is based on Palmolive's powerhouse drumming. She really whacks the shit out of her kit, sorta high-speed metronomic jungle drums. During The Slits' world debut at The Clash's Harlesden gig last March Palmolive battered her floor tom-tom into the ground and it repeatedly fell over. She hasn't been playing for more than a year.

Tessa joined and learnt bass two weeks before that debut - before she was guitarist in the Castrators. Usually dressed in black she moves the least in the group, being content to rip a deep, menacing rumble from her machine.

Viv is the most recent addition to The Slits, replacing previous guitarist Kate Korus two weeks before the

VIV

THE SLITS

PALMOLIVE**ARI UP**

White Riot tour. She was in the Flowers of Romance, the band fronted by Sid Vicious before he joined the Pistols. Viv is ideal for the Slits, spiking the songs with cutting abrasive guitar and adding to the group visual - a kind of 1977 version of their heroes the New York Dolls - with her haystack blonde hair and leather.

It'd been a few weeks since I'd seen The Slits on the White Riot tour and it was about time I saw them again. Bumped into Ari at a gig and she said they were doing Cheltenham Art College the following Saturday. I went along and this is what happened...

We rolled into Cheltenham Art College at six o'clock. It's a typical modern college building, adorned with examples of the students work - sploshy paintings and piles of planks on the front lawn.

I walk through the door. The first people I see are...the Slits... playing pool! Ari jumps up and down with delight when she whacks a particularly good one, but the Slits are bored. They've been hanging around for hours. It finally approaches sound check time.

In the hall I get a shock - it's like they're playing in the bloody canteen, with tables and chairs set out. There's a little wooden stage at one end where Palmolive is trying to get a good drum sound assisted by the hippy sound mixer, who's been hired with the PA. Blimey, she can whack 'em!

When the drums are OK the rest of the Slits take the stage, Viv and Tessa tune up, Ari amuses herself by ripping the red felt cover off the mike and pretending it's a dick. Tessa bends over to adjust her amp and effervescent Ari runs up behind and pokes her up the arse. Tessa is surprised.

Ari can't wait to get started, constantly singing and dancing around. She's wearing this outrageous, huge blue hat on the side of her head over a Dolls-days Johnny Thunders mane of hair, in which is lodged a pink comb, always at the ready.

The right chords are struck...1-2-3-4 They're off, pummelling through "Shoplifting", which screeches to a halt after a minute 'cos Ari can't hear the guitar. After more adjustments they do it all the way through. Then a couple more, finishing with a dynamic version of "Drug Town", their best number I think. It starts on a slow,

ominous riff with Ari intoning the lyrics and Viv wrenching jagged shrieks from her guitar. Then it suddenly speeds up and crashes to a vicious climax. I love it, although the group aren't happy with the sound. The hippy sound crew look bemused.

Right, four hours to kill before they're due on, let's do the interview! Leaving support band the Ants to do their sound-check (they have to play their whole set 'cos the drummer only joined that day!) we go off in search of a quiet room, and find what should be the quietest in the building - the library!

It's like a deranged board meeting - the five of us sitting down at this long table. The atmosphere starts a bit strained. You see, The Slits have only done about two or three interviews but they're already bored with them because they inevitably keep getting asked the same old questions and have to trot out the same old answers and they don't really see the point. So we just have a noisy chat.

On the way to the library The Slits make a point of ripping or scrawling out the word 'punk' on the posters advertising the gig (you know, "punk rock comes to Cheltenham", etc.). They hate the word, and don't really consider themselves a punk rock group.

Palmolive: We are not punks. We're The Slits...

Ari: And we play Slits music!

Viv: We've been labelled too much.

Palmolive: There's no point. We don't belong to anything. We're just ourselves, any group is themselves.

Viv: It's just easy for other people to shove you in a bag.

Ari: It's all just a uniform, what they wear and what they do...all commercial already.

Next we talked about the subject that's gonna rear it's head at every interview The Slits do, - the fact they're girls. Up until now blokes have had rock'n'roll sewn up - hard, street rock'n'roll that is. Oh yeah, there's the Runaways but they pushed the teenie dream bit to get noticed and played rock in the bargain. There've been girl members in male groups but never before has a group of girls like this come along and threatened the male domination of rock. It's no novelty with The Slits ... they just happen to be girls. They've got more spirit and enthusiasm than most male rock bands I've met and can thrash out a sound that has nothing to do with any of them. But The Slits are determined not to get involved with the feminist women's lib stance. They've already turned down an interview with "Spare Rib".

Viv: We don't want to do all that feminist stuff.

Ari: It's rather shitty. They always think of us as girls and we don't want that. We just came together as girls because we're the strongest people we met.

Viv: We're not self-conscious about it...

Palmolive: It's rubbish. It's just so much crap. We don't want to get into it.

Ari: And that's why there aren't any girl groups. They think only boys can play rock. They don't push themselves.

What about the existing girl groups? Brandy, for instance...

Ari: Errgh! The biggest wankers around. They played for the police

once. They're so posh, playing for the police. Fancy that! God! ... cha-cha-cha-music...the Runaways are full of shit as well.

Viv: They're just not innovators of anything - music, ideas, attitudes, anything.

Ari: We're hardly like any other bands.

Viv: 'Spare Rib' thought we'd be all 'yeah, yeah, up the women's rights, blah, blah - but that's discrimination. They shouldn't have just girl groups in there. It's stupid. It's like when those yank magazines bring out the girlie issue...but that'll be gone in a year, all that girl stuff.

Viv said lots of girls come up to the Slits after gigs and say they were great - the penny has dropped, and maybe some are forming bands at the moment. So The Slits are smashing down long-standing barriers, although they think girls have the same faults as men.

Viv: There are millions of girls around who are complete arseholes...everywhere you look there are. I just hope they get the idea when they see us...not to be like us but just to think for themselves. It's hard for them to look different because they've had twenty years of conditioning from magazines like this (picks up copy of '19') what to look like.

How do audiences react in general?

Viv: We get fucking good reactions.

Ari: They don't just headbang, they stare. First they go OOOERRHH!! ... and then we start the song and they go (Ari's mouth drops and eyes bulge), like staring.

Viv: We always get a few people who are going "get 'em off!" ...we don't get dead quiet audiences...good atmospheres.

Right, let's talk about the songs...

Ari: The first one is called "Let's do the Split". It's about a guy...like guys who split up with us...if he gives all the shit we will tell him to fuck off because we're not having that shit off guys.

Viv: All the songs are about really ordinary things.

Ari: It's like a typical guy who wants to have the woman under his thumb like his housewife and all that. We're not having it.

Palmolive: We're not having it!

Ari: "Shoplifting" is about shoplifting, that you usually do. "Slime" is about someone you wanna have it off with.

Viv: "Drug Town"'s about getting hung up on punctuality and football, or television. It's just as much a drug as any drug is.

Palmolive: "Number One Enemy" is about all the people who tell you what to do all the time and you're just saying 'fuck off', we're not having it! Then "Love and Romance" is a piss-take about lovey-dovey, kiss-kiss-kiss...

Viv: It's got really pretty words.

Ari: "Social Servant" is about a real boring old fart like almost everyone is, working from seven o'clock, you know.

Palmolive: What's "Vasolene" about, Tessa?

Tessa: "Vasolene's about coming on people. It's got a double meaning - "come to me, come on me".

Viv: "So Tough" is about Sid (Vicious) and John (Rotten). They went through a period of really not getting on, not understanding each other.

The Slits at last feel totally happy with their line-up, after going through two previous bass players and a guitarist, Kate Korus, who was replaced by Viv.

Palmolive: We were going along with them. It's just the personalities didn't fit.

Viv: I think it's really strong now.

Viv played guitar in the ill-fated Flowers of Romance, the band fronted by a singing Sid Vicious. Palmolive was also in 'em and before they split ex-Clash guitarist Keith Levine was on guitar for a week. In the early days, with a girl called Sarah on bass it was gonna be all girls backing Sid.

Viv: We didn't have our ideas solid, didn't know what direction we were gonna go in - not like this group.

The Flowers of Romance finally broke up when Sid joined the Pistols on bass after thinking about it for a couple of months.

Viv saw The Slits at the first gig at Harlesden (which was great despite sound problems). "I thought, I've got to be up there instead of Kate", and she soon was. That gig met with quite a bit of slagging in the rock press, which seemed caught unawares by The Slits.

"They didn't expect it most of them", said Palmolive. "They thought we were going to be different. All the guys in the papers said we were terrible .. even the fanzines!"

Ari: "But at least that's a compliment because they're punk fanzines anyway! They're too thick to understand the group." Talking of the rock press, the group say they don't like it when Ari is singled out as focal point, least of all Ari - "We're all a different personality!"

Palmolive: I don't want to be an orchestra. I've got my personality and I'm showing it on the stage. That's why I'm playing drums...I'm expressing myself and I want people to notice that.

Viv: A band's much more interesting if it's got four interesting people in it. I can't believe how good it is. Better than any other band I've seen work together.

Palmolive: We have all got strong egos but it works out.

The Slits don't wanna trundle the London club circuit night after night for gigs. They want London appearances to be events, pick who they'll support or where they'll play and generally "be selective about what we do". They'd like to play America but won't even consider making records yet.

Ari: It's far too early to make records.

Viv: Groups rush into it too soon and come out with crap. Anyway playing live's what it's all about.

The White Riot tour was The Slits' first taste of regular live work. Putting their money where their mouths were The Clash paid for The Slits, Buzzcocks and Subway Sect to do the tour and play to more people than they ever could on their own.

They enjoyed themselves tremendously though their antics got them and the tour chuck out of a few hotels.

When we got bored with talking we went off to play on the table football machine in the foyer. That's where the action is for the next couple of hours.

When The Slits get bored with football we go in the hall, which is reasonably full. The deejay, the obvious-

ly the local punk in his ripped t-shirt, safety-pinned sports jacket and flares spins Palmolive's request, Big Youth's "House of Dreadlocks", but the dancing is soon interrupted when a former Slits bass player called Susy turns up. The Slits immediately grab all her limbs and cart her screaming to in front of the stage where she is unceremoniously dumped in an undignified heap. They're all still good friends really!

Now it's time for The Slits. They take the stage but no-one bothers to turn on the couple of light bulbs which serve as stage illumination.

Suddenly, they flare on (joke). A unison 1-2-3-4! and The Slits are off. The sound is better near the back but it's more exciting up front where you can FEEL every walloping beat and catch the full brunt of The Slits' attack.

Palmolive drives the songs along with raw, brute force ("I think of people I hate!") and The Slits get through their sound problems on desperate energy, which makes the whole thing like a half-hour rush.

The expected climax comes with "Drug Town", which sees the now-hatless Ari belting out the words in direct contrast to the damaged chords Viv is hacking out with up and down strokes of her arm. Throughout the set Ari has been unleashing her boredom-fueled pent-up energy in torrents. At one point she pokes her head through curtained windows at the side of the stage to sing to the people outside. And through it all Tessa concentrates on ripping out that roaring backdrop.

They do about half an hour, ending with "Shoplifting". Ari and Palmolive finish by putting Ari's mac over their heads and jumping in the crowd, which is caught unawares by the sudden end. The audience is a wide-ranging mixture of hairy students, smoothies, footballs-out-for-a-drink-with-the-lads and token punks. Reaction during the set has varied between disbelief, fascination, sheer enjoyment (me!) and predictable shouts of "Drop 'em!." The cries for more build but there is no encore.

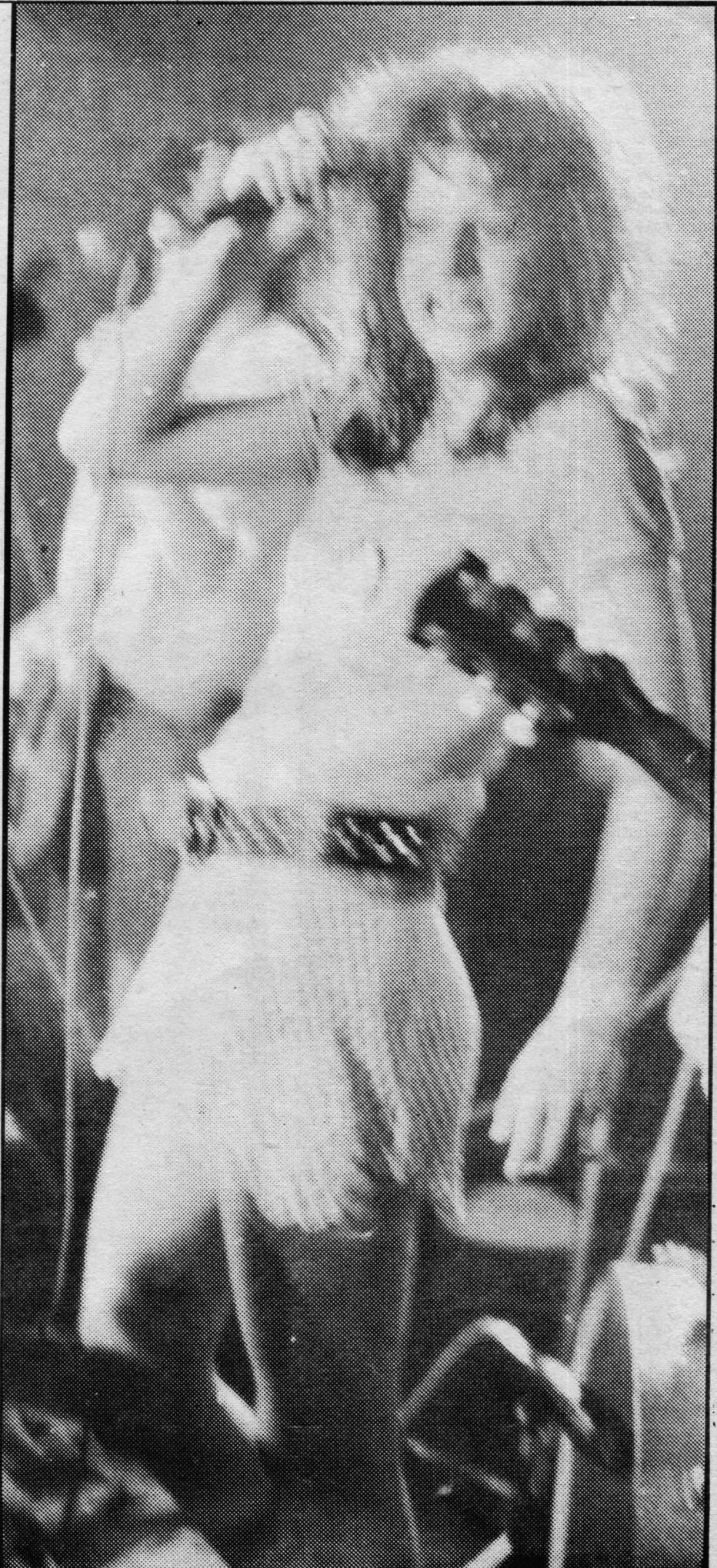
Afterwards Ari and Viv aren't too happy 'cos of the sound, Tessa is at least thankful the bass could be heard and Palmolive says she enjoyed it. I thought it was fine, they came over well, and the crowd, up until now known for its lack of size and reaction was large and appreciative.

What The Slits need is their own sound mixer, who knows the songs and can get the balance which'll bring out the best in the songs.

Anyway, right now I think it's great The Slits exist. A year ago they were part of the audience, couldn't play at all. Now they're up there belting out their own songs for all they're worth and breaking a lot of barriers.'

The Slits are one in the eye for the rock'n'roll rulemakers who judge everything on how fast you can play how many chords and what sex you are. They're raw and can only get better - they know they've got to and will, but they deserve every chance they can get. The least you can do is leave any preconceived ideas at home and give 'em a fair listen.

- Kris Needs



LOONIES

Loonies! Dontcha just love 'em! (No, cries irate reader M. Black of Norwich, get on with something more sensible. Surely there's someone associated with Mike Nesmith who could remember something that you haven't yet published or a Ducks Deluxe family tree or some such - mind you, this bit, written as it is by a boring old windbag, is now one of the few bits of the magazine that's intelligible to me - much more about short-haired layabouts and I'd cancel my subscription, if I had one!)

Anyway, I don't mean real certifiable loonies who aren't particularly lovable or funny. I once was conned into letting one into my flat under the misapprehension that he was a representative of the landlord. When I asked what he wanted he replied, 'What do we all want, money, fame...and then proceeded to try and break a free jazz album by Archie Shepp in two with his bare hands. After a prolonged struggle he was carted off by six policemen and a dog, and certified although after hearing the album I wasn't certain that society hadn't been too hard on him. Peel also once came across a classic loony. A bloke approached him backstage at a festival and thanked him for all the help he'd given to Rod and the Faces (so you can imagine how long ago it was). When John inquired why the chappie was interested he replied that he was the Faces. Not one of them but all of them and could he have an interview as his jacket buttons were microphones. Peel said a few kind words into the gent's blazer and moved on as quickly as possible. A bloke sufficiently demented to see himself as a group might easily be pushed

even further and become the Midland Light Orchestra thereby facilitating important BBC economies.

No, my definition of loony (as those who know me will testify) encompasses those who act in an unusual, eccentric manner prejudicial to decent public order e.g. somebody who won't stop when I want to cross the road or who gets in front of me at the bar and starts a long, complex order involving special brews which have to be fetched from the cellar, snowballs which have to be made and sandwiches which have to be prepared from scratch.

The rock business has always had more than its share of loonies but I expect that it attracts them the way religion used to. Once, if you had long conversations with the furniture you were well on the way to becoming a saint while today you'd probably get the OK to do a concept album. Strangely enough, it's not always the people in our business who seem to be loony who actually are. Look at Screaming Lord Sutch for example, or Alice Cooper gibbering all the way to the bank. Loony behaviour is not always unreasonable. Viv Stanshall once told me how, when faced with the prospect of an appalling family Christmas dinner he went to the bathroom and shaved off all his hair. His re-emergent 'God bless us, every one' appearance was greeted with numbed silence broken only by the sound of forks falling onto plates from lifeless fingers. But wouldn't you like to do it yourself. Keith Moon once recounted how the car transporting him knocked over a drunk. Keith leaped out shout-



PIC: RICHARD YOUNG

This picture bears no relation to the accompanying article but shows the author enjoying a joke with old friends Derek Taylor and Dr. John.

ing 'Get back, I'm a doctor', and the crowd got back! Spot the loony in that one.

Course, anyone can be a loony. Quite recently I spotted a colleague strolling along a tube station platform and began a sort of finger snapping hey boppa roonie singing hipster routine that I thought might amuse him. When he didn't turn round I got right up behind him and leaning over his shoulder went into a hectic bopcat performance worthy of Slim and Slam. Then he did turn round and it was a different bloke. I'm now part of his loonies mythology and he probably goes everywhere by taxi to avoid the punks and hippies on the tube.

I was once lucky enough to encounter one of the great popular music eccentrics of our time. He is mentioned in George Melly's 'On the Road' as active during the fifties and I caught him in the mid sixties but I have no reason to believe that he is no longer 'working'. I was playing at Boston in Lincs at a ballroom known as the Gliderdrome. As this didn't seem to have quite the right ring it was subsequently renamed the Starlight. However, they had a revolving stage and when we came round front, I was aware of a chap in evening dress and Brylcreemed hair standing at the front of the crowd and leaning on the stage. I assumed that he was some sort of bouncer or assistant manager and he greeted us with a cheery wave. During the first couple of numbers I'd catch his eye and try to return his knowing winks as best I could while blasting through 'Mr. Pitiful'. Own up time came during the third number when this bow tied gentleman plunged his hand into his inside pocket and pulled out, no, not a gun, this was Boston Lincs. (blast, groans Mr. Black) but a conductor's baton! With a wild flourish he cleared a space among the assembled peasantry and conducted the band with furious abandon for the rest of the set. The snag was that his timing was wildly erratic and one became sufficiently fascinated as to try and follow him.

That sort of eccentric is quite likeable but the irritating kind of dingbat thrown up by our culture is the confident type who seems to have been a spin off of the last ten years of our music. You know, the kind of stoned public school drop out who wants you to give him money so that Hawkwind can play a free festival at Glastonbury thus encouraging the Martians to land. Whenever I see the Hare Krishna lot approaching well heeled tourists on Oxford Street I always wish I could watch from a safe distance while they pranced and cadged their way along somewhere like Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. What sparked all this off was receiving some handouts recently from an organisation calling itself the Yogi Boogie Society. This included some wonderful thoughts penned by someone called Jim Clark. Could it be the racing driver of the same name? Probably. It began,

'Be gentle.

Expect nothing and you will never be disappointed.

Enjoy what is - you are the why'

Apparently the Yogi Boogie Society publish the Yogi Boogie Journal which reflects the thoughts and feelings of members of the Society whose goal is defined as the dissemination of healthy and life-giving vibrations by way of music, Yoga, massage, meditation, work, groups, food, crafts, love, relationships, art, sun, moon, ocean, nature, fun, responsibility, truth, togetherness, thought, emotion, vibration, sacrament, ceremony, celebration, marriage, holy ritual, creation, glorification, communion, communication, sensation, fluidity, reception, absorption, study, play, life and working it out.

That's what they say. I haven't made it up. Doesn't the spirit of Woodstock have a lot to answer for and wouldn't you like to smuggle Sid Vicious into their annual general meeting. Well, if they expect a donation from me, they will never be disappointed.

I won't offer a little-known-fact-about-John Peel this issue but would like to report a remark that he recently made and you may make of it what you wish. I had read an article by James Cameron in which he, recalling his early journalistic training on a rural paper, expressed his surprise at the number of cases where a farm labourer would be charged with having unlawful carnal knowledge of a duck. While we swirled the brandy round in our goldfish bowl-like glasses we set to musing on the phenomenon of bestiality. Peel being a countryman, I could only bow to his superior knowledge but put forward the theory that if one were forced into some intimate liaison with an animal, the hind quarters of the sow bore some slight similarity with the comparable area in the human being. Then Peel said a strange thing. He said, 'Not when you get really close'...hmm.

John Walters

Joan Baez 'Blowin' Away'

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS HER VOICE...

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Her long association with Bob Dylan led to her playing a dominant part in his Rolling Thunder Revue. It also renewed her zest as a performer.

'Blowin' Away' is a stunning album and marks her debut on Portrait Records.

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JOAN BAEZ 'BLOWIN' AWAY'
featuring the single
'I'm Blowin' Away'
produced by David Kershenbaum

BESERKLEY BOYS

By Ken Barnes

I never knew San Francisco when it was peaking. You've got to talk to a Gene Sculatti or a Greg Shaw to hear all those stories about the old Fillmore days and the pure acid and Quicksilver storming through "Runaway" and free concerts in the park and that indefinable feeling of community and camaraderie and how the Grateful Dead were really incredible but you had to be there and so forth into the night.

I was there during the senescent period—spare change artists in the street, Santana and Tower of Power on the FM radio, a music mecca on the rocks. The big musical excitement in town was which washed-up transplanted balding blues buster from Chicago would be jamming at the Keystone—like would Mike Bloomfield show up? Mark Naftalin? Maybe . . . if the moon is right . . . Nick Gravenites? The Marin Corps is looking for a few good burnouts.



The Rubinoos take five.

People used to take that sort of thing dead seriously, while at the same time Bowie, Ronson & Co. played to 700 (out of 3000) at Winterland in '72 and most British acts went out of their way to avoid the place. In the cultural/musical melting pot, the scene was so self-consciously hip and ultra-electric that you could hear any kind of music in the world—except rock & roll.

The last show I saw up north before coming to my senses and moving to L.A. showed signs of a change coming. It was an annual Halloween costume competition held at a now-defunct Berkeley club called the Long Branch, and the festive holiday atmosphere brought out a lot of bizarrely-attired contestants to mingle with the usual wool-shirt brigade and the standard complement of big shiny black dogs roaming through the aisles. The band was different, too. Earthquake rocked hard with a flair for original material and well-chosen cover versions. They were highly impressive, as was their warmup act, a guy named Greg Kihn strumming an acoustic guitar, singing some neat poppy tunes backed by the band. I thought, what a refreshing show, certainly a welcome antidote to Azteca, but I didn't think anything much would come of it.

Almost five years later I finally make it back to "the City" (as locals smugly call it), and here was that same Greg Kihn headlining at the Boarding House, supported by Beserkley labelmates the Rubinoos, whose neobubblegum pop stylings are the last thing I'd expect San Franciscans to put up with. I can't wait to check out what kind of crowd this bill will draw.

Looking around the Boarding House (like a lot of Bay Area venues, an exceptionally pleasant place to witness live music—spacious, immensely high ceilings—it was once a church—and an entirely comfortable atmosphere), I realize this isn't a fair audience test. The general demeanor and schmooze level of the crowd indicates it's a predominantly invitationally radio/press group, more disposed to be open-minded. Noted was a distinctly higher percentage of wool shirts than prevalent in L.A., but there were no big black shiny dogs.

I was a fan of the **Rubinoos** from their album, and they certainly did not let me down live. They look impossibly young (though apparently in their very early 20's), with guitarist Tommy "TV" Dunbar reminding me strongly of Dean Torrence, both from the cynical/quizzical glint in his eyes and his general antic onstage clowning. Jon Rubin turns out to be a really strong vocalist (the harmonies were excellent as well), and the group pulled off a fast-paced, always-entertaining set.

They played a lot of album tracks, including stellar numbers like the bubblegummy "Wouldn't It Be Nice," "Never Thought It Would Happen," and their semi-hit (still #4 in Buffalo as I write this, nine months after its release) "I Think We're Alone Now." There were also a lot of novelty numbers which might get boring after a while, a crisp "Please Please Me," more convincing than the Flamin' Groovies, and a couple of nifty new numbers, "Falling In Love" and "Ronnie" (not the Four Seasons tune).

Michael Zagaris

low this hated symbol of pure disposable pop-pabulum trash. Sure enough, at first consternation was everywhere to be seen, but damned if the audience didn't applaud at the conclusion, politely, it's true, but those hands were coming together. As for me, I thought the Rubinoos did a sparkling job on the rather drab tune, with great mock-Beatles harmonies, and I'd love to see them tackle some more challenging Archies material like "Jingle Jangle" or "Feelin' Good (S.K.O.O.B.Y.D.O.O.)"

I did find out later that the Rubinoos had not always gotten away with this high-temperament assault on all that's sacred in San Francisco—a while back at Winterland their performance of "Sugar Sugar" provoked a barrage of vegetables (the organic kind, not the audience members themselves). But apparently San Franciscans can take it now, though I can't help imagining a kind of condescension in their attitude, radiating so much eclectic hipness that even bubblegum/pop is acceptable for its novelty value. Or maybe they're on to something, recognizing that bg/pop is an endangered form of music every bit as close to extinction as the ethnic blues, folk, or Bulgarian choral stylings San Franciscans have always taken great pride in supporting. It's a scary thought.

The entire Beserkley Records operation, certainly the quirkiest, most refreshing, and potentially most significant small label setup in the world (with England's Stiff close behind), apparently loves being up there in the Bay Area, and the feeling seems to be mutual. Perhaps there is something to the tiresome regional boast about the open, encouraging atmosphere suitable for unique musical forms to flourish, etc. etc. Earthquake is obviously quite popular in the area, and San Franciscans certainly have taken **Greg Kihn** to their hearts as well if this set was any indication.

Myself, I was surprised. I'd liked the two albums, no problem—especially the second side of his latest, *Again*, but in person he was a revelation, neatly attired in vest and tie with potential teen heartthrob looks, wielding a cool-looking Rickenbacker guitar and backed by a tight, versatile, sharp-singing guitar/bass/drums combo.

They opened with Kihn's brilliant version of "For You" (which ranks with the Hollies' "Sandy" and Manfred Mann's first rendition of "Spirit In The Night" as the great Springsteen covers so far), and takes the song into a new pop-rock dimension the way the Byrds used to transmute Dylan songs. The Lou Reed-ish "Madison Avenue" followed, and it became clear that this was folk-rock for the 70's—ringing guitars, airy harmonies, and a firm, punchy



Greg Kihn at The Boarding House

Michael Zagaris

The highlight was the closing "Rock And Roll Is Dead (And We Don't Care)," a guaranteed showstopper intro'd by Tommy's entirely vicious parody of an acid-rock axe hero—a portrayal aided by a thick wig, fringed leather vest, and huge Elton-style glasses spelling out "rock." The sentiments are cynical, the song itself is a thunderous hard-rocker, and the effect was overpowering.

For an encore, a quick snatch of "Downtown" led into . . . unbelievably, "Sugar Sugar!" This has got to be the ultimate test of cool for any audience, I thought, especially a San Francisco snob hill crowd. They'll never swal-

low this hated symbol of pure disposable pop-pabulum trash. Sure enough, at first consternation was everywhere to be seen, but damned if the audience didn't applaud at the conclusion, politely, it's true, but those hands were coming together. As for me, I thought the Rubinoos did a sparkling job on the rather drab tune, with great mock-Beatles harmonies, and I'd love to see them tackle some more challenging Archies material like "Jingle Jangle" or "Feelin' Good (S.K.O.O.B.Y.D.O.O.)"

THE DOLLS

Album 6641 631



Before anyone discovered New Wave Rock,
The Dolls were inventing it.

PHOTOS: WALT DAVIDSON



THE BOYS



IF there's any justice, then by the time you're reading this The Boys' single, "First Time", should be flying the flag in the Top Ten alongside "Pretty Vacant".

It's a classy Fast Pop single that sounds a hit the moment you hear the opening line: "I met her last Friday at the local dance". Pure Pop.

But of course, as far as most new wave bands are concerned, there's little justice around at the moment.

The Boys' single will probably never get the airplay it deserves and needs to get into the chart.

And that's a cryin' shame.

Kid Reid sings so tongue in cheek about haying his wicked way with the pretty young thing he picks up at the dance that he makes it all sound perfectly innocent. Just right for the chart. Eh pop pickers?

The Boys' attitude to songwriting is simple. It's the same as The Ramones. Lead guitarist Matt Dangerfield sums it up by saying, "We always try to write HIT songs".

"My idea of a good pop song is that it should be short, quick and have a great chorus", adds Kid.

The group have been together now for ten months. Singer and bassist Kid Reid, guitarist John Plain and drummer Jack Black got together when they were working in a T-shirt factory.

John brought along Matt Dangerfield and Norwegian piano player Casino Steel and The Boys were formed.

Dangerfield was formerly in the London S.S.; the "legendary" group which never got past the rehearsal stage, but at some time also featured Mick Jones, Tony James and Bryan James, all of whom have since gone on to other things.

Casino was in a group called The Brats, who cut an album around the time that the second New York Dolls album was released. (An old Brats' song, "Sick on You", is now a highlight of the Boys' set.)

The Boys currently rehearse in what was once the upstairs bar of a now disused late-night club in deepest Putney. It's a tacky, sleazy joint that gives them a good sound and a pool table downstairs.

Interviewing (or any conversation for that matter) becomes impossible every so often as District line trains thunder in and out of Putney Bridge station, a few feet above our heads. However, London Transport permitting, the group wax enthusiastically about their soon to be released elpee.

Kid: "On the whole, we're pretty pleased with it, although you can never be totally happy. There's always something that could be done better. We did 18 tracks in 3 days."

Cas: "3 days to record, and 3 months to release the album."

Kid: "That's the record company. There are things that they have to do, but I don't know why it takes them 3 months."

The group produced the album themselves. They originally had an outside producer but thought his over-producing killed the essential rawness in their sound.

But on "I Don't Care" their first single (released earlier this year), both the vocals and Casino's piano were badly mixed. Isn't a lot of impact lost in the murky production?

John: "That was partly intentional,

we wanted it to sound live."

Cas: "Maybe on a few of the tracks on the album we do go a bit too far, but the intention was to keep the vocals low and instruments up to give more power and excitement, like on the early Stones singles."

The two guitarists complement each other well, without sounding messy, John Plain's slashed rhythms ensuring nothing falls flat during any of Matt Dangerfield's twisting solos.

Matt acknowledges the influence groups like the Ramones and Sex Pistols have had on The Boys.

"Almost everyone who saw the Ramones the first time they came over was influenced by them."

But a lot of groups have just jumped on the bandwagon haven't they?

Kid: "Originally the Pistols and Clash tried to get people to think, but instead most people have just parroted those two groups, without thinking for themselves."

The Boys are not a group for those who see punk rock as this year's fashion craze. They're not considered one of the "in" groups to like anyway. They're certainly too down to earth for yer average Kings Road punk jet setter, being more at home down the pub with a pint than out being cool and liggin'.

A great example of the sort of shit that has occurred at their recent gig at the Camden Music Machine: one of the lesser of the psuedo-political punk bandwagon jumpers pulled his band out of their support spot saying The Boys "weren't radical enough".

Not that it bothered The Boys much. To them music is fun and a great way of life.

Matt: "There are too many bands just doing it 'cos they know they can get away with fuckin' murder."

John: "Just get up and scream into the mike. Okay, it might be fun for a while, but it doesn't really give the audience a good time. For me, the only thing that really matters is the music."

They showed how much they care when they supported The Jam at Hammersmith Odeon a couple of weeks ago.

Only two songs into the set Kid Reid told the audience "This is pointless, we can't go on", and the band left the stage...

Before they'd gone on, The Boys had been waiting for hours in the hope they'd get the soundcheck which, in a place like the Odeon, is essential.

But for some reason, time was wasted, the hours ticked by, people hung around doing nothing, and The Boys were due on stage - no soundcheck, no monitors, a fucking awful sound.

They weren't getting a fair deal and quite rightly walked off.

As Saints' singer Chris Bailey said about an hour later as the Saints walked off the same stage after similar problems:

"This is what happens when people try to make money out of rock'n'roll who don't give a fuck."

Anyway, The Boys are far more at home in a place like The Marquee than in the big halls (which are no fun at the best of times).

Kid: "It's much better playing the smaller places. It's more intimate. You can see the people you are playing to. And kids aren't even allowed to dance at places like the Odeon. That's terrible!"

Dead right.

Whatever else, The Boys are a dance band.

The first big break for The Boys came in April when they got a support spot on John Cale's British Tour.

Jack: "We improved a lot on the Cale tour, and we enjoyed doing it. John Cale as a person is great. A lot of people hate him but we got on really well with him."

The Boys were one of the first new wave groups to get a record contract when they signed with NEMS, the company founded in the 60s by Beatles manager Brian Epstein.

It's a small label, but an RCA distribution deal means you can buy their records just about anywhere.

But wasn't signing so early (after only three gigs!) sacrificing yourself to the record company machine which is ever-ready to push you into the recording studio before you're ready?

Kid: "At that stage, we simply couldn't go on without signing. Basically it was money. I know it sounds bad, but we couldn't afford to keep the band on the road through the early gigs."

But Kid admits the first single was probably recorded before the group were really ready. Listening to "I don't care" it's immediately obvious how much the band have developed and improved since earlier this year.

Although Kid is definitely the front man on stage, there is no real group leader. The Boys are a democratic band and they like it that way.

The usual songwriting credit is Steel/Dangerfield, but both Kid Reid and John Plain contribute songs. ("First Time" is one of John's).

Cas: "Sometimes I get the basic idea for a song, and Matt makes the lyrics into proper English!"

Something that amazed the group a while back was the suggestion in one of the weekly music rags that there was a lot of money behind them.

Cas: "That's a joke! We get £20 a week each from NEMS, and just look at our equipment. I mean, my piano is a toy piano. You can get it in Woolworths for £40!"

Allowing Marianne Faithful up on stage with them at the Marquee to sing "Memphis" recently brought The Boys under some flak.

"We broke the rules playing with her", says Kid, annoyed that the New Order already seems to have set standards as rigid as those it set out to smash.

Cas: "It was a good laugh. Fuck those people who give some intellectual reason why we shouldn't play with whoever we want. She said she liked us, and asked if she could sing. I don't care if she's not from our decade. I'd jam with Dean Martin any day!"

Shock! Horror! Outrage!

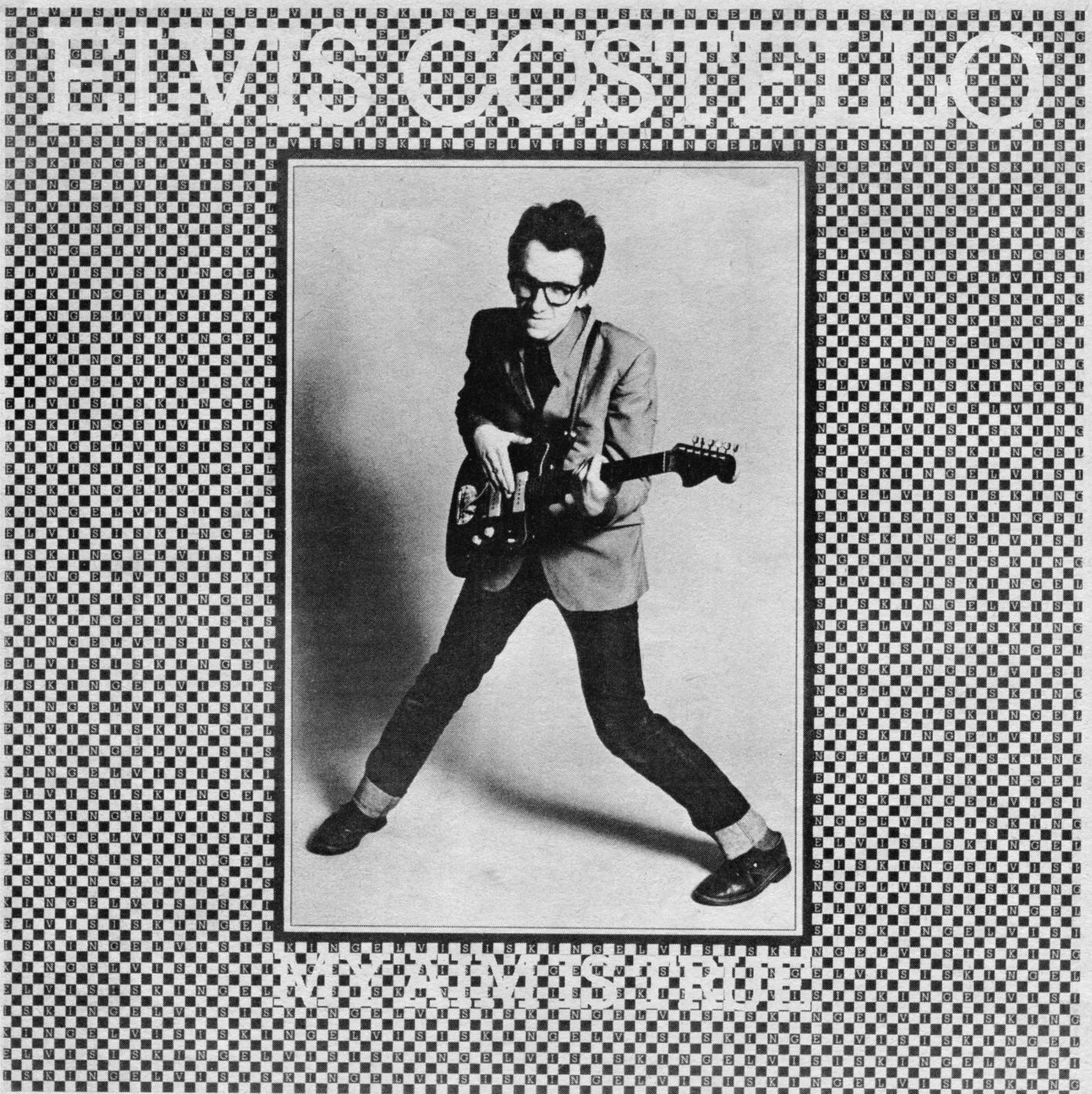
At last the truth is out about Casino Steel's only true hero!

"I like him 'cause he's a drunk like me. I bet he could sniff more glue than any punk."

"Anytime Dino wants to play the Marquee - I'd love it!"

Follow that!

- Adrian Thrills



BUY IT

ROOTS ROCK REGGAE

One thing you're gonna see a lot more of in Zigzag is reggae. From now on Zigzag's No Black Music policy is out of the window.

How CAN you ignore it? Some of the most exciting, pioneering and vital music around is coming from Jamaica and British bands like Matumbi and Aswad.

The JA music scene is an incestuous hotbed of creativity, throwing out scores of great records every week. There isn't another music scene like it in the world for output, set-up or energy. And you don't have to be a black man to appreciate it...amazing music is amazing music.

This is intended as a sort of guide to some of the JA sounds worth hearing at the moment, which are quite easy to obtain. An introduction, if you like, for readers whose only previous exposure to the music has been the Eagles and other white groups' weak, embarrassing imitations.

Well, I s'pose I'd better start with reggae's superstar, Bob Marley. He made the magic cross-over from the reggae shops years ago with "Catch a Fire", and now his albums sit colourfully alongside the Eagles and Elton John.

Has he lost his roots? He denies it, but "Exodus" (Island) is a long way from the Trenchtown ghetto which sparked his earlier work. It's his cleanest, most commercial offering yet, and is safely embedded in the album charts already.

Rhythms are diamond hard, synthesisers whine and Bob soars effortlessly over the top. Side one is heavy political, which I prefer; side two a brace of soft, romantic love songs. The title track - a passionate chant - comes over as a Marley classic as does "Guiltiness", and "Natural Mystic".

If you wanna hear what Bob sounded like when Bunny Livingstone and Peter Tosh were in the Wailers try "Birth of a Legend Volume One", (Epic) a collection of stuff they did in the 60's/early 70's with Clement "Coxsone" Dodd.

Talking of Peter Tosh...his "Equal Rights" (Virgin) shows why "Exodus" doesn't MOVE me. It's a vast improvement on Tosh's '76 release "Legalise it". The songs are strong statements delivered with bitterness, pain, tenderness, and passion over dense, weighty backings.

The other ex-Wailer, Bunny Livingstone, released one of the finest reggae albums of 1976 with "Blackheart Man" (Island) which is still around.

Another of last year's best albums, the Abyssinians' "Satta Massa Gana" has only just found a British release. With a few alterations to the mix it's out on Klik as "Forward to Zion", and is just as compelling as ever.

It's music that reaches out and grabs you with hard, steady rhythms and intense harmonies, 'specially on



"Satta Massa Gana" and "Declaration of Rights". Just hear this album!

Junior Murvin scored a massive hit last year with "Police and Thieves", (which The Clash covered on their album). It would have hit the national chart but for the stupid chart system...still, an album of the same name has appeared on Island and contains some of Murvin's JA hits like "Tedious". It's a weird, synthesiser-dominated album which bubbles and cranks along rather repetitively.

Fred Locks' long-awaited "Black Star Liners" (which donated its name to Aylesbury's great reggae shop!), wasn't the out-and-out corker promised by the title track which was released as a single in early 1976, but it's still a highly individual representation of Fred's intense, personal songs. "Vision of Redemption", "Walls" and "Black Star Liners" showcase his strange voice. It's on Vulcan.

For pure roots reggae I prefer "Two Sevens Clash" (Joe Gibbs) by the three-piece Culture. The title track is one of the best reggae singles of the year - and though the album couldn't hope to equal that, it's a strong debut, high on melody and pulse. Their harmonies rank among the best, along with the Abyssinians.

Leroy Smart is one of reggae's most popular names. "Superstar" (Third

World) is a strong showcase of his talents - a highly-individual voice which he uses with controlled passion. And the backings are fantastic.

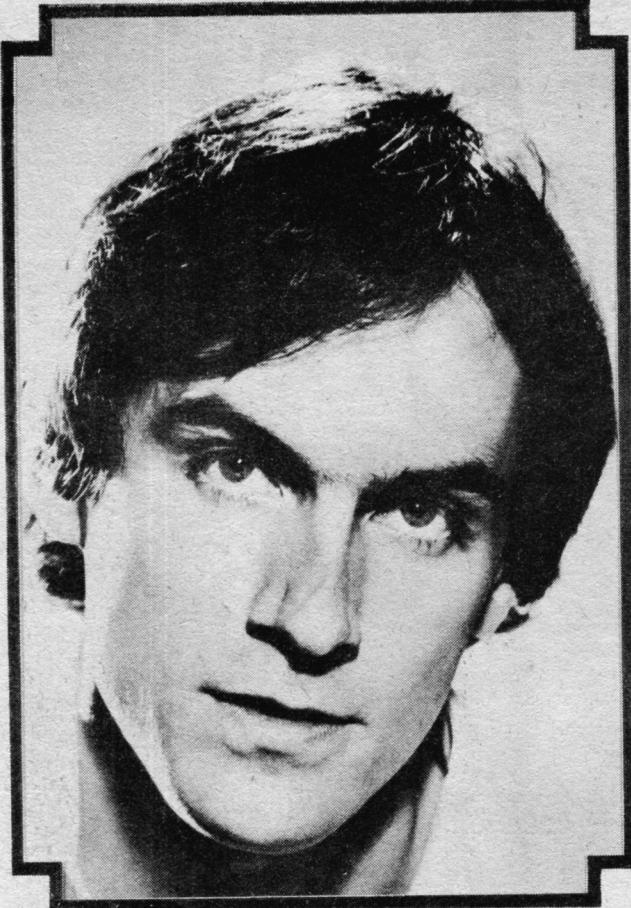
I ain't gonna venture into the weird world of dub this time, but a couple of really good "toasting" albums around at the moment (geezers rapping/singing over rhythms) are "Watch Your Step Youthman" by Jah Stitch (Third World) and "Man from Bozrah" by Tapper Zukie (Stars) which has got a sleeve poem by Patti Smith (sic) and Lenny Kaye, his greatest fans apart from the Clash.

This is different music to the conventional "songs" of the roots singers. Here the toasters take their rhythm, mess around with echo and effects, and punch out the message over the top.

Try the stoned lurch of "Man from Bozrah's title track, or heartbeat rhythm-shout of Stitch's "Dreadlocks Don't Play".

This look at a few current albums is only scraping the surface of a welter of goodies. It's only an introduction but you hear this lot and I guarantee you'll be hooked, or at least realise reggae don't stop at "Hotel California".

Kris Needs



AFTER JAMES TAYLOR, EVERYONE ELSE IS JUST A SINGER-SONGWRITER

There's no mistaking the voice. More than any other in the early '70s it brought a new lyricism in popular music, the gentle side of life and loving.

Not since 'Sweet Baby James' has James Taylor sounded as good, nor come up with an album as full of songs destined to become classics. There are twelve on "J.T." to place alongside 'Fire and Rain', 'Carolina In My Mind', 'Country Road' or 'You've Got a Friend' not forgetting the hit single 'Handy Man'.

"J.T." also marks the re-union of James Taylor with producer Peter Asher. He, along with Carly Simon, Linda Ronstadt, Russ Kunkel, Leland Sklar, David Sanborn, Danny Kortchmar and others, has helped bring an old friend back into the limelight.

Ain't that good to know.

JAMES TAYLOR'S
NEW ALBUM "JT"
FEATURING
THE SINGLE
'HANDY MAN'

PRODUCED BY PETER ASHER

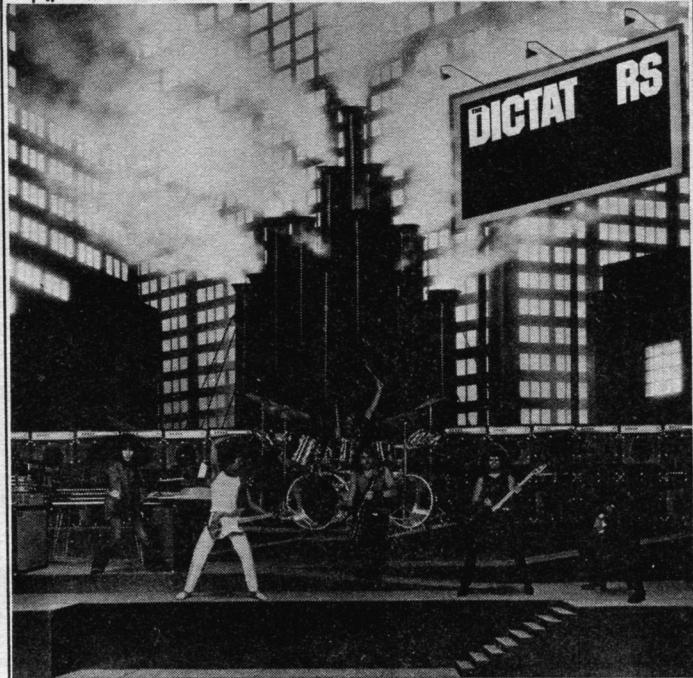
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REVIEWS 45s

SNATCH: I.R.T./ Stanley (Bomp). Single of the month! Totally different from anything else around at the moment. Just Judy Nylon and Pat Palladin and their guitars - no drums or bass - with two cutting, nerve-edge songs which recall the dark territory once stalked by the Velvets. There's just something about these recordings, done in a front room, which makes you play them over and over. Can't wait to see Judy and Pat with their gigging band!

MC5: Borderline/Looking At You (Skydog). Obscure early recordings showing the Detroit Demons at their anarchic best. "Borderline" is so rough your speakers start sneaking towards the door. "Looking At You" is a far superior one version to the one on "Back In The USA". Liberez Wayne Kramer it says on the sleeve. Yeah! His stun guitar playing on this track is so searingly powerful it's brutal! An ear-sizzler! Get it!

The SCRUFFS: Break the Ice/ She Say Yea (Power Play). All the way from Memphis, the Scruffs are Dave Branyan (vocals); Stephen Burns (vocals, guitar, piano); Zeph Paulson (drums, vocals); Bill Godley (bass, vocals). This is a fairly harmless poppy love song in 60's mid-tempo melodic style. Worth a listen if you get the chance.

ELECTRIC CHAIRS: Stuck On You/ Paranoia Paradise/The Last Time (Ilegal). A nut-crushing rhythm 'n' blues with the indomitable Wayne County chewing through the lyrics like the true blue bitch he is. The lengthy version of "The Last Time" is a superb exercise in musical chaos with Wayne becoming so delirious in his passion that he actually throws up in the middle of it (it's all here in living technicolour!). Move over Mick Jagger!

VENUS AND THE RAZORBLADES: I Want To Be Where The Boys Are/Dog Food (Spark). Kim Fowley's latest protégés come up with a rather predictable song here. They take over where the Runaways left off with the singer whining that she wants to fight with the boys. Typical bit of Fowley nonsense and, although "Dog Food" moves along at a steady rate this record is fairly nondescript.

STRANGLERS: Something Better Change/ Straighten Out (UA). Intro sounds really promising but the whole thing falls away after that. It's the same old Strangs formula - snarling voices, rumbling bass, merry-go-round organ... it's getting boring. Something better change - too right mate!

PORK DUKES: Bend and Flush/Throbbing Gristle (Wood). My copy of this record is as warped as this group must be. I mean can you imagine these lyrics over a speeded-up "Louie Lou Louie" chord pattern? - "Gonorrhea/ In your ear/ Got the thrush/ Up my crutch"! Not really my cup of tea. The B side is just as bad.

THE ELECTRIC CHAIRS



VIC SCHWANBERG

EDDIE AND THE HOT RODS: Do Anything You Wanna Do/Schoolgirl Love (Island). Change of direction for a band who've fallen out of favour a bit lately. This is rather laid back for them, with 12-string guitars being twanged and...well you'd expect this sort of thing from Tom Petty and his mates.

STINKY TOYS: Boozy Creed/Driver Blues (Polydor). Les punques Francais, currently doing dates in England to little enthusiasm although their dead-serious discordant cavoring make a masochistic change! Fairly heavy stuff for Frogs but this single is a bit lightweight by English standards - too long, sprawling and strained but not without a certain chaotic attraction.

DESPERATE BICYCLES: The Medium Was Tedium/ Don't Back the Front (Refill). These sound like a bunch of university intellectuals trying to be punx. No guitar just weedy organ churning out a claustrophobic riff with bass and drums. Lyrics are suitably banal. As dynamic as a wet flannel.

MOTORHEAD: Motorhead/City Kids (Chiswick). Stripped-down Panzer tank rhythm section careers along almost out of control at a suicidal pace while Lemmy sounds like he's gonna bite his tongue off any minute as he hoarsely spits out the speed freak lyrics. A three minute death crash.

ROBERT GORDON: Red Hot/Sweet Surrender (Private Stock). A very surprising record from a bloke who used to be singer for New York's Tuff Darts. This song is a true golden oldie and, although this is a commercial version, it stays pretty close to the spirit of the original. Great to jive to, could be a disco smash! 'B' side is a doowop-style ballad where Mr. Gordon tries to imitate Elvis (Presley, that is!).

THE ONLY ONES: Lovers of Today/Peter and his Pets (pre-release!). Much-vaunted new band come up with average debut - poppy, fast with a bit of bite but not enough impact to lift it above the ever-growing pile. Oh and it's a 12-incher.

BRUCE JOHNSTON?

BRUCE

Bruce Johnston played an important role as a member of The Beach Boys when they were at their peak. Worked on classic Beach Boys' cuts like 'Help Me Rhonda', 'California Girls' and 'Good Vibrations', and wrote 'Disney Girls', a track from the critically acclaimed 'Surf's Up'.

Bruce Johnston then left the band to concentrate on a solo career, working with Elton John, Art Garfunkel and David Cassidy. During this period he wrote the Grammy Award Winning 'Write The Songs'.

Bruce Johnston now confirms his true status as a solo artist with his debut CBS album: 'Going Public'. It features a variety of songs including 'Disney Girls', 'I Write The Songs' and what must be the first ever surfing disco recording, 'Pipeline'. The new single, 'Rendezvous', which you've almost certainly heard on your radio, also features on this superb album.

Bruce Johnston has brought together the considerable talents of Gary Puckett and Caleb Quaye, with production by Gary Usher to create a remarkable solo album.

Bruce Johnston debut album 'Going Public' featuring the new single, 'Rendezvous'

BRUCE JOHNSTON
GOING PUBLIC



Produced by Gary Usher

Records
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MORE SINGLES...

CELIA AND THE MUTATIONS: 'Mony Mony' / 'Mean to Me' (United Artists). A mutated version of the Tommy James classic, and doesn't sound half as good... and yes, we know it's the Stranglers but who is Celia? Play it at 33 and you might get some idea. It sounds better at that speed too.

SQUEEZE: 'A Packet of Three' - 'Cat on a Wall' / 'Nightride' / 'Backtrack' (Deptford Fun City). Sophisticated punk, if there is such a thing. Squeeze seem more musically accomplished than a lot of bands. A weird discordant organ sound adds to the solid riffs belted out by the dual guitar onslaught of Glen Tilbrook and Chris Difford. 'Backtrack' is a fine rocker with some superb Winifred Attwell boogie piano.

STANLEY FRANK: 'S'cool Days' / 'On a Line' (Power Exchange) Canadian Stan comes up with a pop goodie which bemoans the fate of school kids. It might be autobiographical - the Diary of Stan Frank, I s'pose, but really the lyrics come secondary to the music, which rocks along at a fair old rate.

THE DRONES: 'Lookalikes' / 'Corgi Crap' / 'Hard On Me' / 'You'll Lose' (O.H.M.S.). A rough 'n' nasty EP, probably recorded in one take. Plenty of energy but because the mix is so bad it doesn't really come across. The songs are about the same old things - identity crisis/ slagging royalty/ suffering/ change and all that, but it's good fun all the same.

THE CLASH: 'Listen' / 'Interview' / 'Capital Radio'. A collectors' item in its own time. This single was given away through NME to anyone who sent in the red sticker attached to the first 10,000 copies of The Clash album. I haven't seen this record reviewed anywhere, although NME did modestly point out that it was "utterly incredible". "Listen" is a lengthy instrumental improvisation with the interview - conducted between The Clash and Tony Parsons on a tube train - fading in and out. "Capital Radio" is absolutely incredible! One of the best things The Clash have done. Three cheers for NME for putting it out, countless blessings to The Clash for recording an ace single for nothing, and to the people who haven't got a copy - tough, cos it's an absolute dynamite 45!

Colin Keinch

THE CLASH



ALBUMS

ROCK 'N' ROLL WITH THE MODERN LOVERS
- Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers (Beserkley import).

It's true what they've been saying. Jonathan Richman has gone absolutely crazy. Off the rails. Loop-house Central. This is almost a Novelty Album.

This guy is right out on his own limb. No competition at all. No-one in their right senses would attempt to operate commercially in this area.

People say that this, Richman's 3rd album (not counting the 3 tracks on 'Beserkley Chartbusters Vol. 1') is the biggest disappointment of their year. Others say it's the biggest shock of the year. Giovanni thinks it's the greatest thing since the wheel!

The first Modern Lovers album had heavy promise - even though it was a collection of rejected demos cut in 2 days during April 1972. It was the perfect combination of imperfection!

That group broke up. Too much brain-power in the same room, so the rumour goes. (One day I'll write the whole story . . . I'm collecting stuff about it now - like, for instance, when they moved into Phil Kaufman's house. Emmylou Harris moved out and went to live with Linda Ronstadt).

Richman put together a new Modern Lovers and recorded a second album which everybody (from Johnny Rotten to Needy - see Zigzag sixty-six) thought was inferior to the first, which by this time was on the way to becoming the biggest underground album of the seventies.

That first album (demos, remember) sounds like 'St. Pepper' compared to this new one, which says it was recorded at the CBS Studies in Folsom Street San Francisco. If this is true, I can only assume it was done in the LAVATORIES of the above studio. If it cost more than a couple of hundred dollars to make, I'll eat my jacket.

When we first listened to it, we had to keep smiling at each other - like attendants in a lunatic asylum.

This is certainly one of the most extraordinary albums I've ever heard.

"I still love the fifties" cried Richman in 1972, and he still does in '77. His group sounds like he locked them up for 6 months, erased their memories, and force-fed them 24 hours a day with tapes of Dion and the Belmonts, the Monotones, Simon and Garfunkel, Buddy Holly and the Crickets and Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps. But before he let them hear Buddy or Gene, he mixed the electric guitar tracks out of them.

There isn't an electric guitar to be heard here. The absence of a roaring guitar solo sometimes gets so frustrating you find yourself wincing. Twitching at the very least.

The drummer plays triangles and coconuts and chimes and a cabaret snare (and amazes his friends at parties with his virtuosity on the spoons); the bass player plays a bull fiddle; the guitarist looks like his main gig is playing in a Hawaiian Jazz group.

'Rockin Rockin Leprechauns' is the nearest thing, in terms of feeling, to 1957 that I've heard.

"I won't have any electricity around me. The only electricity I'll tolerate is stuff we generate ourselves, during

our act" said Richman, when he got back on the road following the near electrocution at the nightclub in Atlanta in September 1975 - and he's not kidding.

If a band took a tape like this around record companies in London, A+R men would think they were either taking the piss or else stone crazy. They'd be thrown or laughed out of every one.

When Richman tours this autumn, I'll be very interested to learn how Kaufman and Kolotkin produced and engineered this thing. Richard Perry will have to retire when he hears it. Glyn Johns too.

The most disconcerting thing is the sleeve. The photo on the front is ALMOST a re-touched version of the one on the back . . . BUT NOT QUITE. There are too many mind games at work on this album!

I like it. It's the weirdest album of the year so far. The world isn't ready for this one - and I doubt if it ever will be.

Is Richman crackers? Frankly, I doubt it. We might be, but I don't think he is.

Billy 'Sword' Wilkinson

MANIFEST DESTINY - The Dictators (Asylum K 53061).

The Dictators' first album was called "The Dictators Go Girl Crazy!" and was great fun. They sung about getting drunk, being stoned, driving cars, screwing chicks - all the vital ingredients of the American teenager's fun weekend. It was put over in a gross, loud, ham-fisted and thoroughly enjoyable manner with a welter of memorable tunes.

On first hearing I thought "Manifest Destiny" should be re-titled "The Dictators Go Dead Serious".

Gone are singer Handsome Dick Manitoba's drunken bellowings, the inept renderings of classics like "I Got You Babe" and the simple, cruising FUN songs. Instead they seemed to have got into heavy epics on the destruction of technological mankind and normal love songs. And the music sounded ponderous, derivative, unoriginal and too slow - in different places, and sometimes at the same time.

BUT THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT WHEN I FIRST HEARD IT! Now...well I like it. A lot actually.

What's happened is the Dictators have steered their all-American gross bozo stance away from escapist fun weekends to more serious matters - like chemical cockups producing rampant monsters and catching radioactive syphilis with devastating consequences.

And they're more serious about girls too.

The production is handled by Blue Oyster Cult's dynamic duo Sandy Pearlman and Murray Krugman, who have infused the brash but melodic Dictators' sound with depth and subtlety. The group are unleashed at their live headbanging' overkill level on the final cut, Ig's "Search and Destroy". They sure can play.

It's the songs on which this album lives and kicks out...like the aforementioned epic "Disease", which builds to a manic climax, or "Sleeping with

the TV on", a title and chorus to remember with relish. "Science Gone too Far" is mid-period BOC pulling funny faces. The charging "Young, Fast and Scientific" bombs up behind with great force.

There's still the bummers which probably put me off in the first place, "Hey Boys", "Stepping Out" and "Heartache" still don't make too much of an impression, but they're getting there.

I like the words on this album - "don't want to die but I wouldn't mind if I was an idiot" ("Disease").

Play it a lot.

- Kris Needs

THE RUBINOOS (Beserkley Import)

Who would dare to predict a Tommy James revival? Maybe not me, but I can think of a lot worse things to happen, and if 'Crimson And Clover' is ever going to be a hit again, doubtless it'll be the Rubinoos (pronounced Ruby Noos, by the way) who'll be singing it. It's unlikely that the four members of the group who claim to have been playing together for seven years already, although none of them is yet twenty, would regard themselves as originals, but more as imitators, especially of the innocent pop sounds of the '60s. And that's exactly where their appeal lies - if you think of every other kind of revival that has taken place in pop music, it's always been related to a movement which threatened pop at the time, but I don't think it's ever actually been pop itself - which has looked over its shoulder and seen that there's enough good material to last for the next ten years. There's not really any need to change the way you do it, either - the elitism of the golden oldie is such that only exceptional records are remembered, and they only become exceptional if they're either weird or such big hits that everyone knows them.

For that reason, there's no need for anyone else to do 'Bohemian Rhapsody' or 'Bridge Over Troubled Water', but the Rubinoos have proved in America that if you take a number four hit that's ten years old, and copy it exactly, enough time has passed for it to be even bigger than it was originally, in fact number one. The song, by the way, is 'I Think We're Alone Now', and is typical of the guileless teenage quality that pervades even the group's own compositions.

Most of the songs, and the solo instrumentals, are the work of Tommy (T.V.) Dunbar, whose brother is in Beserkley's 'grown up' band, Earthquake, and Dunbar is obviously very serious about fitting into the '60s time warp, both his lyrics and his solos being admirably short of pretension or excessive skill, which in these days has become a positive advantage. Jon Rubin plays rhythm guitar and sings lead, by the way, while Royse Ader and Donn Spindt are on bass and drums respectively. All four sing, but in truly ethnic harmony style, and were it not for the

fact that the record doesn't sound scratched, it would be an easy mistake to date it as a Kama Sutra '60s job.

Actually, there are one or two other places, like the clavinet in 'Hard To Get', the joke at Led Zep's expense in 'Rock And Roll Is Dead', and the one track on the record that doesn't fit, 'Memories', which goes on too long (past the magic three minutes and a bit), and has a very up to date guitar solo. The rest are great, from the Coasters styled 'Peek-A-Boo', with Spindt singing the bass bits, to the 'Louie Louie' intro to 'Wouldn't It Be Nice' (not the Beach Boys, but they could do that one fine too), and the pleasanter mutation of 'You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet' in 'Leave My Heart Alone'.

Altogether, an undemanding half an hour of pop, owing its inspiration to a time when that commodity didn't have to appeal to your mum, which could have been made years ago, and might have prevented us getting into the state we're in now if it had.

John Tobler

ELVIS COSTELLO - My Aim is True (Stiff SEEZ 3)

I could never see the attraction in classical music, all that hanging about between notes, I mean what do people with great classic collections play when they're gettin' ready to go out? Stiff have given away a thousand MAIT's and they really ought to have gone to all those unfortunate Bartok lovers, then how ya gonna keep her at the opera on yer arm now that she's heard EC?

By now you must know that Elvis looks like a mix of Potsy and Woody Allen and when you are a computer operator an'all your little black book must be full only of cab numbers.

"I said I'm so happy I could die
She said drop dead and left with
another guy"

Jackson Browne goes on about the cruelty of love but all the time you know he don't have to get up for work in the morning, while Elvis knows a blow out is a blow out full stop but if the lads say 'how dja get on' he'll say 'great' and bite clean through that quivering bottom lip. No long reflective walks or emotive strings or words about new kids in town on Stiff, thank God. What we got is what Elvis' bedroom walls heard for years plus can this bloke write rock songs?

I know a lot of older readers wanna hear about how the songs are structured and who they've heard him before as and all the rest of that snob/filing cabinet crap to drop in public but albums as good as this don't even want to make me begin to stop dancing and act as clinical as some drones would have you believe rock is. It's as simple as this. I bought the album yesterday, played it ever since, it makes me feel energetic and beats Abba for sticking after one play, (see with Elvis you WANNA remember), and unless your idea of rock is 'Going for the One' I'd recommend you to snap one up. 'Sgt twelve tracks, all and each as good, and the words will only fail ta gitcha if you were dropped on your heart as a kid.

So you don't know me from Adam, right? Just listen to it first then, but make sure the shop's booths are

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licensed for dancing.

Elvis Costello's My Aim is True is
a good, good album.
She said git it.

- Danny Baker

RAW

A brief plug for Raw Records of Cambridge, who have just put out their second and third singles. The first one, a few months ago, was 'Sick Of You' by the Users, and they've now reissued the first single by the (Hammersmith) Gorillas, 'You Really Got Me', which came out a couple of years ago on the unlikely Penny Farthing label. Also released now is the first single by a Birmingham group called the Killjoys, whose drummer is allegedly named Joe 45 (presumably he's only half the man Joe 90 used to be). Future products from Raw include a compilation album by the Creation, who of course included the late Ron Wood in their line up, but weren't too bad despite that. Raw is the same lot of people as the 'Remember Those Oldies' shop which advertised herein a few issues ago, and their address is 48 King Street, Cambridge.

John Tobler

PORK DUKES (My mother didn't like it!) punk single, "Bend and Flush"/"Throbbing Gristle". 80p, SAE,
Tursents, 26a Birchington Road,
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SMOKE : THE NEW POETRY, 12p per copy
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DOPEY LETTER

Sir - I have long been a fan of
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'class' were as well. Nowadays 'Punk'
(alias Kris Needs) seems to be taking
over the mag - how low can one go.
If we want 'Punk' we can follow the
weeklies or come to that - dailies.
Perhaps you are trying to reach a
wider (and younger) audience.

Do you realise that 'swearing'
shows an ignorance of the English lan-
guage and surely as journalists, you
wouldn't admit to that, and to actually
head an article with one definitely
doesn't do anything for your magazine.
Now, on top of this, you are
advertising a DRUGS magazine. What
are you trying to do. Encouraging
kids to your magazine with 'Punk'
plus, what seems, now the promoting of
the use of drugs. Surely with W.H.
Smith now dealing with your magazine
it's not the time for sticking your
neck out, irresponsibly, especially
into avenues that Zigzag, I'm sure,
was never intended for.

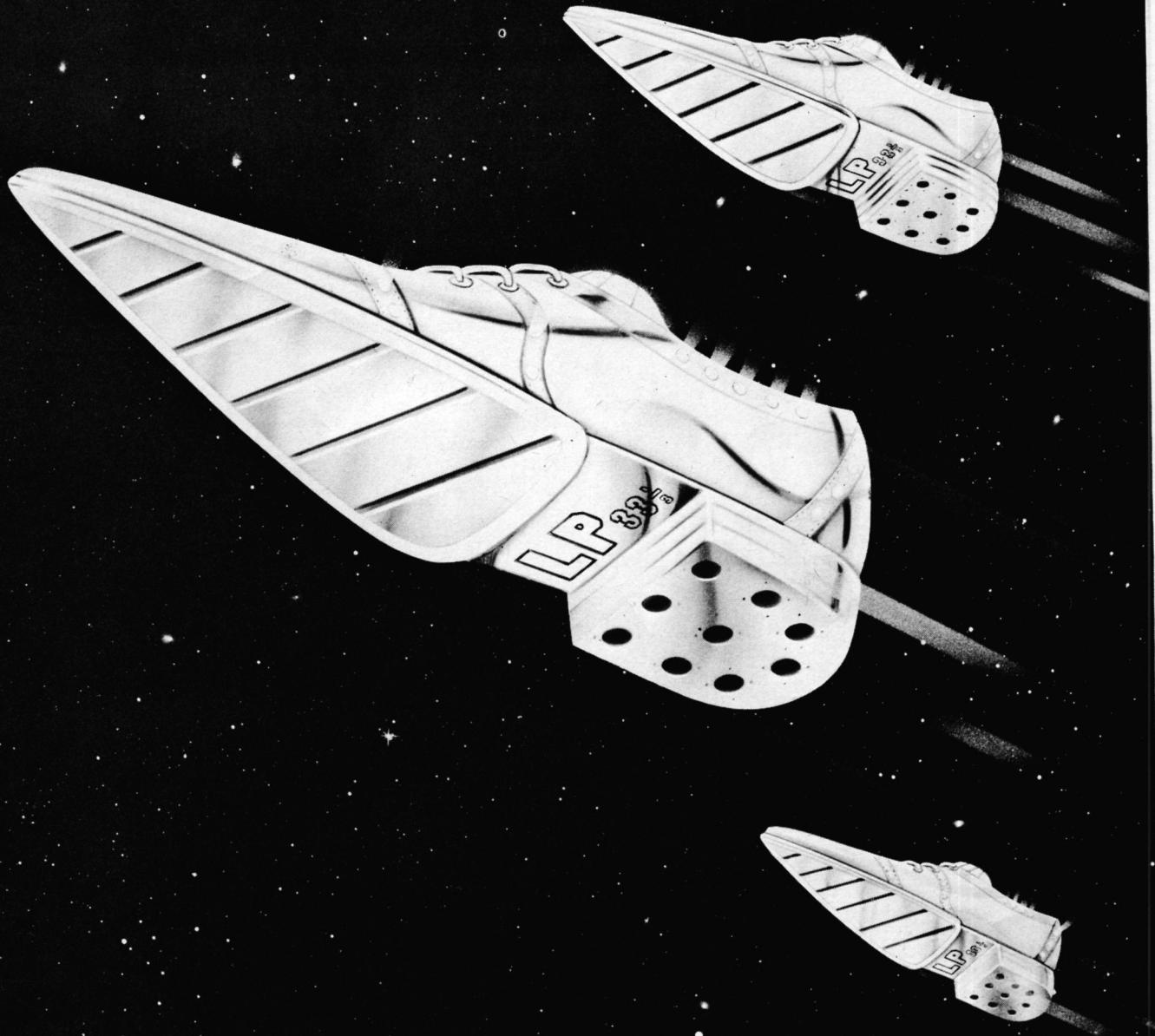
How about trying kicking these bad
habits you are developing, and per-
haps keep the majority of your most
ardent fans.

Yours Hopefully

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